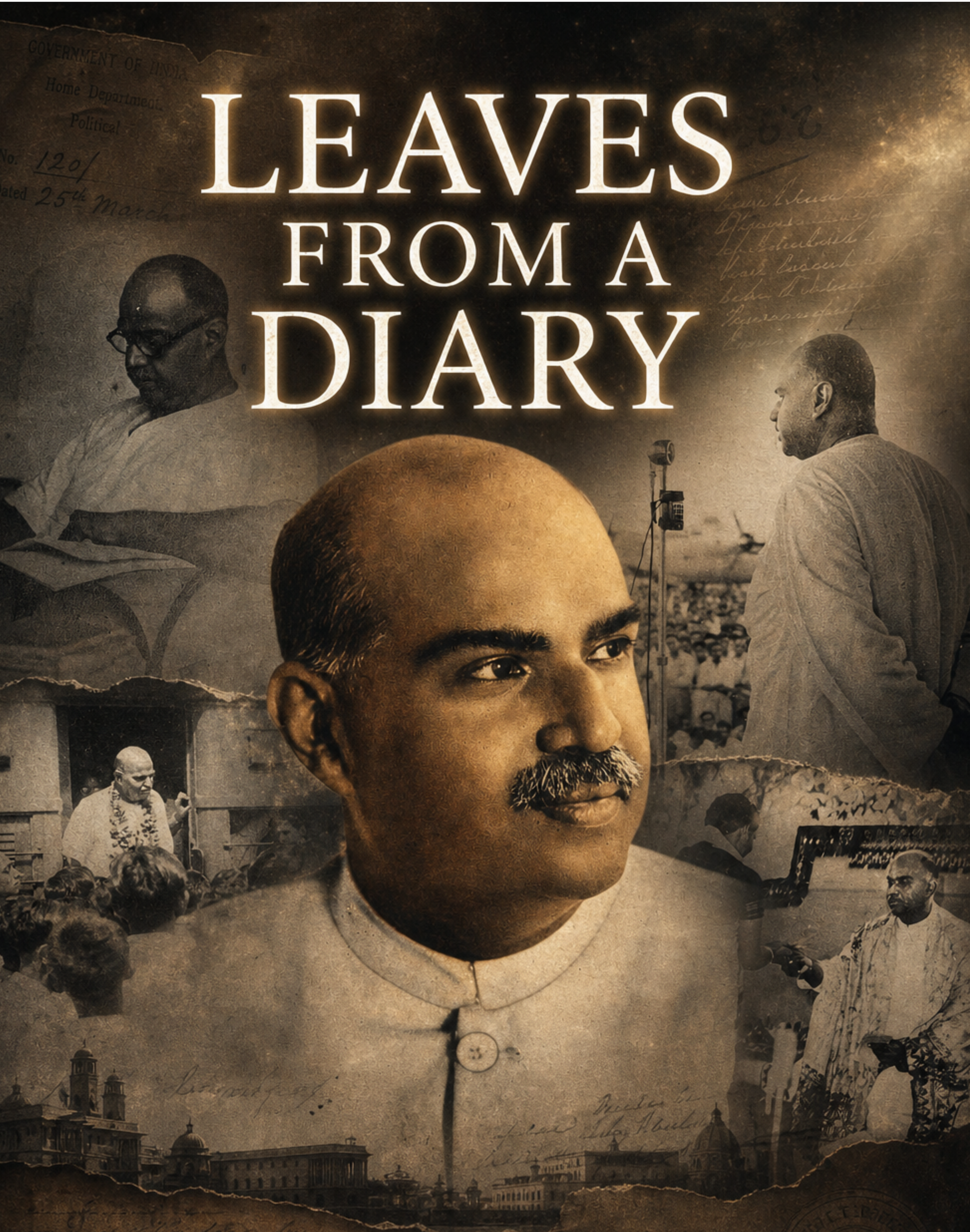
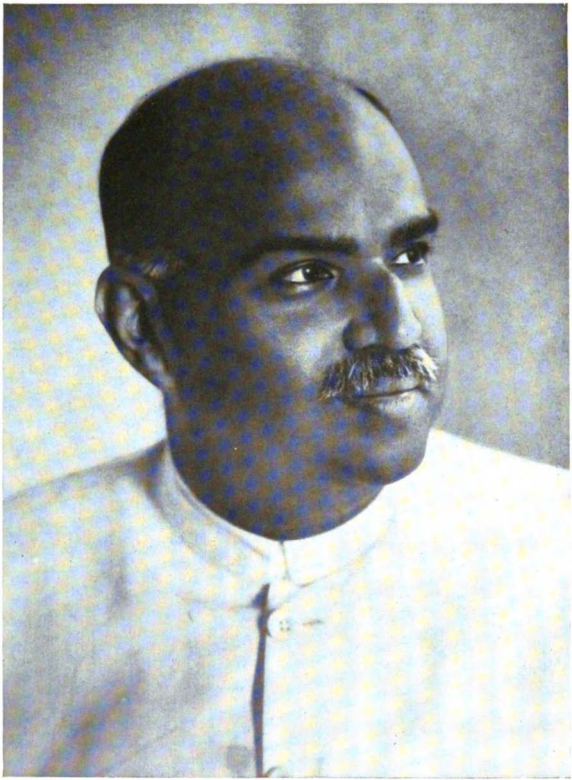
LEAVES FROM A DIARY



Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee



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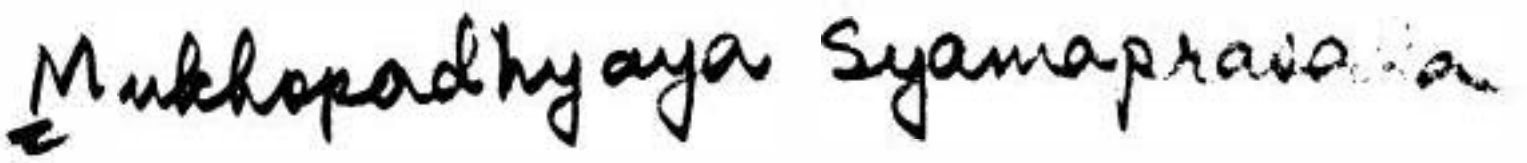

Syama Prasad Mookerjee

C. ALCUTTA
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
DELHI BOMB. A MADRAS
1993

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Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

NEW YORK TORONTO
DELHI BOMBAY CALCUTTA MADRAS KARACHI
KUALA LUMPUR SINGAPORE HONG KONG TOKYO
NAIROBI DAR ES SALAAM
MELBOURNE AUCKLAND

and associates in
BERLIN IBADAN

© Oxford University Press 1993

Printed in India
at Graphitech India Limited, Bidhannagar, Calcutta 700 091
and published by Neil O'Brien, Oxford University Press,
5 Lala Lajpat Rai Sarani, Calcutta 700 020

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Introduction

Syama Prasad Mookerjee was born to one of the most illustrious families of Bengal. His father was Sir Asutosh, whose name is a household word among Bengalis. Syama Prasad not only added to the prestige and renown of the family to which he was born, but also made significant contributions to the political and cultural life of the country.

He was born on 6 July 1901. He blazed a brilliant career as a student in Calcutta University. In 1923 he became a Fellow of the Senate of the University of Calcutta. A year later, when his father, Sir Asutosh, died, Syama Prasad was elected to fill his vacancy in the Syndicate. He enrolled as an Advocate in the Calcutta High Court in 1924. In 1926 he left for England to study for the Bar and joined Lincoln's Inn ; he was called to the Bar in 1927. In 1934, at the young age of thirty-three, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University and held that office till 1938 ; he is to date the youngest person to be appointed Vice-Chancellor.

As Vice-Chancellor he took many innovative steps. He invited eminent men from all walks of life to give lectures on career guidance. He liked to involve students in adult literacy programmes. Even after 1938, he remained the most important member in the Syndicate and continued to guide the affairs of the University. His involvement in education was not restricted to Calcutta University alone. He actively participated in the affairs of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta ; he was a member of the Court and Council of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Chairman of the Inter-University Board.

From the sphere of education Syama Prasad moved to the realm of politics. In 1939 he was elected to the Bengal Legislative Council as a Congress candidate representing Calcutta University, but the following year he resigned when the Congress decided to boycott the Legislature. Syama Prasad did not agree with the policy of the Congress and he stood for election as an independent candidate and was re-elected. From then onwards he was actively involved in politics till his death in 1953.

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In 1937, the first Provincial Assembly Elections were held under the dispension of the Government of India Act of 1935. Syama Prasad was elected as an independent candidate from the Calcutta University constituency. The elections did not produce a single party majority in the Assembly. Fazlul Haq's Krishak Praja Party emerged as the single largest party. Fazlul Haq was keen to form a coalition with the Congress but talks with the Congress fell through. Fazlul Haq then formed a coalition government with the Muslim League and some independent members. The diaries of Syama Prasad that are printed here chronicle the subsequent history of Bengal up to early 1946.

The years between 1937 and 1946, the period covered by the diaries, were a crucial phase of Syama Prasad's political career. When the Krishak Praja Party—Muslim League coalition ministry was in power (1937-41), Syama Prasad was a leading member of the opposition. On 12 December 1941, he joined the Progressive Coalition Ministry headed by Fazlul Haq as Finance Minister, and resigned from the ministry on 20 November 1942. It was during these years that Syama Prasad emerged as a new spokesman of the Hindus.

This collection of diaries contains all of Syama Prasad's autobiographical writings in English, and the English translation of some of his Bengali writings. It might be interesting to know that in a letter to his family, written during his detention in Kashmir, he mentioned that he was keeping a diary and had started writing a biography of his father. However, after his death on 23 June 1953, no such diary or manuscript was found among the papers sent back by the Kashmir government. His family was unable to persuade the Kashmir government to locate these writings.

Syama Prasad began the English diary on New Year's Day 1939 with the purpose of making it a daily record of his own life. We find that from 1 January 1939 to 12 February 1939 the entries are daily. But it is difficult for a man, involved in so many things, to find time and leisure everyday to keep a diary. Thus we find, that after a gap of about two months there is an entry dated 11 April 1939. Then follows a break of five years. Syama Prasad

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resumes the diary on 2 January 1944. The entries thereafter are on 21 October 1944, 6 December 1945, and 5 January 1946.

It thus appears that from time to time Syama Prasad would decide to keep a daily record. From 1 January 1939, for forty-three days, he succeeded in doing so, but after that the entries are no longer a daily account of events but an overview of what had happened in the intervening months. He tried to take advantage of three recesses to take his story forward from where he had left off on 12 February 1939. One was during the Easter holidays in Puri in April 1939 ; the second was at Madhupur during the Puja holidays in October 1944 ; and the third was in Calcutta in December 1945, soon after his physical collapse on 24 November. Syama Prasad had also taken up his pen on 2 January 1944, which must have been the result of yet another New Year's Day resolution to keep a diary !

Syama Prasad fell seriously ill in November 1945. On 25 December he went to his father's house at Madhupur, and while convalescing there he resumed his diary. He had taken his stenographer with him, and started writing on 5 January 1946. He started one account in English and two in Bengali. He succeeded in writing a fairly detailed account in English, of his experience as a minister in Bengal from 12 December 1941 to 20 November 1942. This account is being reproduced here for the first time. Unfortunately, Syama Prasad stayed in Madhupur only for a month. He left for Calcutta on 27 January 1946, to meet the Parliamentary Delegation, which had come from England, to find a way to end the impassé in Indian politics.

Of his two writings in Bengali, one is an account of his childhood till he was eight years old. This has not been included in this book. The other centres round the events that had led to his physical collapse. While engaged in election campaigns in November 1945, when he stood as a Hindu Mahasabha candidate for the Central Assembly and had taken no rest for three consecutive days from 22 to 24 November, he had to intervene between agitating students and the trigger-happy police of Calcutta during the widespread demonstrations to protest against the death sentences pronounced against three

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officers, after the first INA trial. An English translation of this account has been included here. Syama Prasad's two Bengali accounts, along with some of his letters written from Kashmir just before his death, were published with an introduction by his brother Uma Prasad in 1988 (*Syama Prasader Diary O Mrityu Prasanga*, Mitra & Ghosh, Calcutta).

Syama Prasad's English diary reveals that from 1941 to 42 he was one of the pillars of the Progressive Coalition headed by A.K. Fazlul Haq. In a speech delivered in the Bengal Assembly on 12 February 1943, Syama Prasad said : 'For the first time in the history of this province, representatives of large sections of Hindus, Muslims, and other communities combined to work for the provincial constitution in December 1941'. The principal architects of the coalition were Sarat Chandra Bose and Syama Prasad. Sarat Chandra Bose was then the leader of the Congress Party in the Assembly though his group was functioning independently of the all-India organization. Syama Prasad was the spokesman of the Hindu cause, against the communal policy followed by the previous ministry under the influence of the Muslim League. Bose and Syama Prasad were able to persuade Fazlul Haq, the erstwhile Chief Minister, to bring in his large following consisting largely of Muslim M.L.A.'s and lead the coalition. Syama Prasad was fully aware of the 'assets and liabilities' of its leader : 'Left to himself he (Haq) is one of the most lovable personalities. He indeed shines in the company he keeps—a good batch of friends and followers may help him to do enormous good to his people and country, a bad lot may lead him to hell.'

However, other events, some of them international, overtook the prospects of a good government in Bengal. The ministers assumed office on 12 December 1941. The previous day, Sarat Bose had been arrested and was to remain in detention without trial under the Defence of India Rules till the middle of 1945. Five days earlier, Japan had declared war against Britain. Within a few weeks the former was to occupy practically the whole of South-East Asia, thus bringing the war to the very doorstep of India. 1942 was a momentous year. After the fall of

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Singapore, Malaya and Burma, the British Government realized that India's co-operation was necessary if the Empire was to be saved from Japan. An emissary, Sir Stafford Cripps, was sent from England to negotiate with the Indian leaders. His proposals, however, did not fulfil the expectations of any of the political parties. The Congress passed a formal public resolution on 8 August 1942, demanding that the British should 'Quit India'. The Government retorted by putting all prominent Congressmen in detention. The popular movement that followed was suppressed brutally.

At that time, Syama Prasad was faced with two major problems that affected the life, liberty, and happiness of the people of his province. The first problem was the policy of the 'Scorched earth' which was adopted early in 1942, and was applicable only to areas on the eastern border and eastern coastal regions of the country. This policy caused much hardship to the people and was one of the causes of the terrible famine of Bengal in 1943. The other was the highly oppressive measures adopted in the district of Midnapore to suppress the popular rising of the 'August Movement'.

As minister and a leading member of the Cabinet, Syama Prasad wrote in his diary his opinion about the new government—'... an unsympathetic bureaucracy headed by a cheaply clever and third-rate Governor.' It was not only in the pages of his diary that Syama Prasad recorded his opinion of Sir John Herbert, the Governor, he also spelt it out in his letters written to the Governor on 7 March, 26 July, and 16 November. These letters are included in the Appendices to this book. At the time of his resignation, Syama Prasad wrote: 'The Governor was extremely anxious that my correspondence with him should not see the light of day and he wanted an assurance from me to that effect. I told him that I could give him no such assurance unless he was prepared to help me in one respect. I pointed out that in his own country even the British Prime Minister to whom an Indian Viceroy or Governor owes his appointments, could be removed from office by virtue of the will of the people represented through the Parliament. There must be some machinery

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available in this country whereby we could get rid of an incompetent Governor like himself who was thoroughly unfit to shoulder the great responsibilities of his office during a grave emergency. ... My letters were published shortly afterwards and they were proscribed by the Government.'

Starting his account of how the ministry functioned, Syama Prasad wrote, 'The Governor and the bureaucracy were open supporters of the (Muslim) League and although only forty out of the one hundred and twenty-three Muslim members were in the opposition... the Governor pressed us, over and again, to abandon Haq and to settle with the League.' He confessed that working as a minister in such a situation was 'a strange experience'.

The Muslim League placed Fazlul Haq in an awkward situation, accusing him of betraying Islam. In Syama Prasad's analysis Haq's eventual downfall came because 'lacking the courage of his convictions, [he] failed to organize the Muslims under the banner of his party'. However, in Syama Prasad's opinion, 'Haq was undoubtedly able and prominent [among the Muslims]. ... [He] however had great weaknesses as well. It was difficult for him to apply his mind to anything seriously. He could not always be trusted and had to be guarded every moment.' The Nawab of Dacca was also in the Cabinet, and being the head of the leading Muslim family of the province, he would be a foil to the charge that Haq and his Muslim colleagues were not true representatives of the Muslim community.

It would be interesting to examine one instance of how this ministry dealt with communal issues. Soon after assuming office, Haq, Syama Prasad and the Nawab jointly addressed public meetings in Dacca and Narayanganj where riots had raged only a few months earlier. The Nawab made an 'outspoken' speech and warned that the new government 'was not going to tolerate any acts of injustice'. The Cabinet granted amnesty to convicted persons and withdrew pending prosecutions. Syama Prasad felt that the 'whole Dacca atmosphere changed like magic'. His assessment was that the Nawab 'was most lovable and indeed thoroughly non-communal. He was however in perpetual want

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and lacked those traits of character which could make him a leader among men.'

Syama Prasad's opinion about the bureaucracy was that 'fanning of the communal flame and bowing to the will of Clive Street were the two dominant features of Bengal's administration'. (Clive Street in Calcutta had the head offices of all the big commercial and industrial establishments owned by the British in eastern India). Syama Prasad found that the Chief Minister in his capacity as Home Minister 'was practically helpless'. He added : 'I made him pass orders which we thought were just and rational. But we were outmanoeuvered by the Secretariat, or vetoed by the Governor. A regular tug of war went on. Herbert accused me of interfering with the affairs of the Home Department which was not my own. Haq and I both bluntly replied that ours was a joint responsibility and it was perfectly constitutional for us to have acted together.' It was perhaps the practice of all Governors then to preside over meetings of the Cabinet. Syama Prasad refers to the parleys they would have before formal meetings of the Cabinet, so that they were able to present the Governor with agreed opinions.

With the fall of Burma, war came to the doorstep of Bengal. The 'Denial Policy' formulated by the War and Civil Authorities in Delhi, was for the confiscation and destruction of the means of communication, like bicycles and boats, in the border and coastal districts of Bengal, and also for the removal of stocks of grain. Syama Prasad and his colleagues failed to bring about any modifications in the policy. He wrote: 'The plan for removal of rice and paddy was executed by Herbert personally.' When Syama Prasad criticised the 'Denial Policy' he was quietly told that, 'but for the fact that I was myself a minister, my attitude would have been misinterpreted as indicative of sympathy with the enemy'. He adds: 'the secret instructions as to what the officials, military and civil, were to do in case of invasion or failure of the army, practically indicated that the Government had given Bengal up as lost.' Syama Prasad's persistent demand for a Home Army for the defence of Bengal, for giving wider facilities to Bengalis for military training, was always turned

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down on some pretext or the other. Various excuses were given but as Syama Prasad wrote, 'the real stumbling block was the lack of trust'.

Syama Prasad made another bold suggestion. He argued that the patriots who were then in detention could help in organizing a People's War Front against the enemy. They were all great patriots whose services might be utilized for this purpose. He wrote to the Governor on 26 July 1942: 'After all, it should not be forgotten that we stand very close to a devastating war which has already done havoc in several countries which were previously under British occupation. May I ask where are those high permanent British officials who were the trustees and guardians of the local inhabitants of those lands ? Many of them have quietly or hurriedly left those countries, but the people belonging to the land are still suffering misery at the hands of the enemy.'

The Governor was informed about the steps that would have to be taken by the Government, should the Congress party adopt the 'Quit India' resolution. Haq, the Chief Minister, was shown the instructions, and when he demanded that the whole matter be placed before the Cabinet, the Governor wrote back that the Cabinet would meet later and that he expected that any minister who did not agree with the policy outlined by the Government of India would forthwith resign and make the task of administration easier for the Governor. Syama Prasad adds : 'In view of the struggle that was going on between him and me, he obviously referred to me.' The Governor carried out those secret instructions by arresting leaders of the Congress on the evening of 8 August, and called a meeting of the Cabinet on the 9th.

Syama Prasad made up his mind that he would resign, but before taking that step he wrote a long letter to the Viceroy on 12 August, within four days of the mass arrest of all the Congress leaders. This letter is also included in the Appendices. In the very third paragraph of the letter he said, 'The demand of the Congress as embodied in its last resolution virtually constitutes the *national demand* of India as a whole..... What is regarded as the most unfortunate decision on the part of the British Government is its refusal to negotiate with Mahatma Gandhi.' He made

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certain definite proposals to end the political deadlock at a time when the Japanese forces were threatening to attack the eastern regions. Syama Prasad went on to say, 'The British Government should declare that India's freedom is formally recognised ; that a National Government would be formed which would be composite in character, would include representatives of important parties, and would declare its determination to fight the Axis Powers, and not to conclude a separate peace with the enemy; that the war policy of India would be in accordance with the policy determined by the Allied War Council on which India was to be representated ; that it would concentrate on the active policy of industrialization and economic uplift of India so that India might effectively prosecute the war ; and that a Constituent Assembly would prepare a draft constitution, and that any minority would have the right to refer any proposal regarding the future constitution to the arbitration of an International Tribunal.' Lord Linlithgow's reply, which, not unexpectedly, was altogether negative, came late in September and Syama Prasad felt that he could no longer continue as a minister in a British province.

The other ground on which he resigned was his experience that the so-called 'Provincial Autonomy', supposed to have been enshrined in the Government of India Act of 1935, had become a complete farce with Sir John Herbert as the Governor of Bengal. On his resignation he delivered a speech in the Assembly (*see* Appendix V). He mentioned instances of the Governor's interference in the working of the ministry, responsible to the elected Legislature. He said, 'It is common knowledge that a governor of an Indian province is selected not always on the ground of merit, or breadth of outlook, but often for personal considerations and political patronage. Thus a man who by virtue of his administrative and personal qualities may not even be competent to become a head clerk in Clive Street, or who by virtue of his capacity for carrying on intrigues and setting one against the other may at best adorn a modest chair in Elysium Row, finds himself raised to the giddy heights of governorship of an Indian province.' (Clive Street in Calcutta, as mentioned

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earlier, is where the British commercial houses stood, and Elysium Row housed the Criminal Investigation and Detective Departments of the Police).

Syama Prasad's formal resignation was delayed till the middle of November (16.11.42) because of a devastating cyclone. The district of Midnapore was flooded by tidal waves. The bureaucracy made use of the Defence of India Rules to keep this natural calamity out of the newspapers! Syama Prasad wrote: 'The District Magistrate, I found later, had sent a confidential report to the Secretariat stating, that the best way to teach the people of Midnapore an unforgettable lesson was to postpone relief by a few weeks.' During the 'August Movement' the civil administration had been paralysed and 'free' governments proclaimed in many parts of that district. A severe policy of repression was being pursued by the Government. Syama Prasad toured the district. He met many of the political prisoners who were the trusted leaders of the people, and an agreement was reached that if they were released they would devote their time and energy to relief work. The Chief Minister, Haq, was also present for part of the conference, and he was prepared to abide by whatever Syama Prasad did. But ultimately they were overruled by the Governor.

A biographer of Syama Prasad or a historian would naturally ask, what clues, if any, are available in these diaries as to why he joined the Hindu Mahasabha. Between 1937 and 1941 when the provincial administration in Bengal was being run on communal lines and riots were frequent, Syama Prasad's grievance against the Congress was that although it was the Hindus themselves who were the supporters of the Congress, their spokesmen would not stand up against injustices meeted out to them. They were scared of being called communal. Also, in the 40's, his accusation against the Congress leaders was that they were deceiving themselves, and were also misleading their countrymen, because in the same breath they were saying that they would not allow the partitioning of the country, and also, that every province had a right to self-determination, and hence to secession. An interesting fact recorded in the diary is that just before the 'Quit

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India' resolution, Syama Prasad broke journey at Allahabad solely for the purpose of having a long discussion with Jawaharlal Nehru.

Despite the fact that Syama Prasad had started dealing with all sorts of people very early in life, he was basically an introvert and always kept his emotions to himself. Only on rare occasions did he write of his personal feelings, like the problems that an honest man without any steady income had to face. He once wrote, 'I feel ever and ever more the need for a regular substantial income. I have no greed of wealth. .... Suffer as I might, may God give me strength and wisdom to maintain my integrity and independence, and not sacrifice them for money's sake.' One can say with admiration that he never lacked that strength.

The Bengali diary written by Syama Prasad during the month of convalescence at Madhupur, however, is very different. Here he lays bare his heart and we feel that we see the author face to face. It may be that he was writing it as an *aide-mémoire*, to be used on a future occasion when he would sit down to write a history for the public. Here he writes about his extreme loneliness—he had lost his wife when he was only thirty-one. He talks about the anguish he felt when he saw the shameless egotism in some people while organizing the election campaign for the Hindu Mahasabha. Above all, he is dismayed to find that all his efforts to prevent the division of his dear motherland had so far come to nothing. This account gives us an insight into his philosophy of life. He does not refer to any text or teacher, but one can see that the bedrock of his values lies in the doctrine of selfless work preached in the *Geeta*.

Ashim Kumar Datta

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MEMORANDUM

Registered Design No 668,615

Oh God!

Give me faith, courage, strength and peace of mind.

Give me the will and the power to do good to others.

Give me your blessings that I may think of you in times of prosperity and woe and merge myself in your boundless affection.

Forgive me for all the wrongs I have done and lead me on to you and you alone.

7.1.39.

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The English Diary

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SUNDAY—January 1st, 1939

NEW YEAR'S DAY (Festivus Bank Holiday)
Registered Design No. 844815

Sun rises 8.8; sets 4.1 Lighting up 4.31 High Water London Bridge 3.36 a.m.; 3.31 p.m.

At Madhupur. The new year opens with my health damaged and my mind greatly depressed. On August-1937 I fell down the stairs at Bandra. On return I suffered a bl-. The ailment developed into pleurisy and pneumonia. Although I recovered, I have often suffered from a severe pain at the back. This pain recurred at Madhupur in October last and it has not yet disappeared. At times it has a most paralysing effect on the entire system and leaves me almost out of action for some time. I had an X-ray taken in middle of December and the report was examined both by Dr Mitra Calcutta and Dr Liverpool. They think the pain is muscular, for the little pleural adhesion which still remains is negligible. The rest at Madhupur has not produced any benefit. Rather the pain has become more acute.

The weather at Madhupur has been dry and pleasant. Manmatha Roy has come here for inspecting the construction of his new house. Dr. Saha Baran is also here.

Dr Debendra Majumdar has stood for election to the MDP Municipality. There are two wards at our house, Bandra and Bandi. Both candidates are are canvassing tomorrow. My name was in the previous voters' list but was excluded on the technical ground that I had not sent my Matric certificate in support of my claim for enrolment on the basis of educational qualification. Dr M. says, the objection was taken by his rival, Subodh Babu, who came to see me two days and behaved like an innocent lamb. I hope Dr M. will succeed.

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Sunday, 1 January, 1939

At Madhupur. The new year opens with my health damaged and mind greatly depressed. In August 1937 I fell down the stairs at Bombay. On return I suffered a lot. The ailment developed into pleurisy and pneumonia. Although I recovered, I have often suffered from a severe pain at the back. This pain recurred at Madhupur in October last and it has not yet disappeared. At times it has a most paralysing effect on the entire system and leaves me almost out of action for some time. I had an X-ray taken in the middle of December and the report was examined both by Sir Nilratan and Dr Sivapada. They think the pain is muscular, for the little pleural adhesion which still remains is negligible. The rest at Madhupur has not produced any benefit. Rather, the pain has become more acute. The weather at Madhupur has been dry and pleasant. Manmatha Roy has come here for inspecting the construction of his new house. Mr Satis Basu is also here. Dr Deben Majumdar has stood for election to the MDP Municipality. There are two voters at our house, *Barda* and *Boudi*. Both can't vote as we are leaving tomorrow. My name was in the previous voters' list but was excluded on the technical ground that I had not sent my Matric Certificate in support of my claim for enrolment on the basis of educational qualifications. Dr M. says this objection was taken by his rival, Subodh Babu, who came to see us twodays [ago] and behaved like an innocent lamb. I hope Dr M. will succeed.

Monday, 2 January, 1939

Left for Calcutta by 18 Down. A bogie was attached and we had two compartments reserved in it. There was an awful crowd in the train. During the holidays the E.I.R. people provide for special trains for the outward journeys, but are utterly careless about public convenience when the time comes for people to return to Calcutta. While on our journey we noticed a large

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number of passengers being left behind on the platforms at various stations. Satis Babu bade farewell. Gave him Rs 20 and a *balaposh*, as his was burnt in two places accidentally. I don't know if we shall have him with us at Madhupur next time when we come—which will be October 1939 probably.

Ordered Indian meals from the Indian restaurant car. The children all joined, except Santu, Phantu and Bulbul who are observing one year's restriction after their *upanayan* in June last.

The train was late by nearly an hour, half of which was made up by the time we reached Calcutta. Saw the Honours List at Asansol. I am rather nervous about myself. I was glad my name was not in the list. Knighthood has hardly any great value nowadays and the whole system of titles should be abandoned. Talking about honours, honestly I am not happy about my doctorate. My services to the University have been entirely voluntary and any bestowal of mark of recognition somehow mars the ideal which I try to keep before me. Still, there it came and I couldn't say no, for I knew that would hurt many and create a misunderstanding.

Tuesday, 3 January, 1939

Election of Fellows by Faculties. Faculty of Arts re-elected me and elected Joges Chakravarti (Registrar) in place of late Heramba Maitra. Faculty of Science elected Himadri Mookerjee in place of Jnanchandra Ghosh (retired). Faculty of Medicine elected Dr L. M. Banerjee, defeating Dr Birendra Nath Ghosh (9 to 5). From the Registered Graduates, Pramatha and Sailendra Nath Mitra (P.G.) were elected, the latter standing *vide* Hiralal Haldar who resigned. Personally I was not much in favour of University officers occupying elected seats, which should be filled by independent men who would not hesitate to speak out. The presence of such men on the Senate, always desirable, is indispensable at the present juncture. Both Joges Babu and Sailen Babu were however extremely anxious to

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come—and ultimately I consented. I hope their election will not in any way hamper the interest of the University. Attended Court. No news about the big arbitration matters. They have not yet been decided. Financially I feel greatly handicapped. Of this later.

Sivapada saw me in the evening. The pain continues. I am suffering greatly for want of sleep. He advises short-wave treatment to be given by Dr K. B. Ghosh. It is decided to commence this from tomorrow.

Wednesday, 4 January, 1939

This day is the anniversary of a memorable occasion which has left a mark on my life's destiny. I can only pray for Divine grace and blessings, so that I may maintain the feelings with which I undertook great responsibilities. As long as I live, the memory of this day will continue as a sacred treasure.

Could not attend Court. Went to Dr K. B. Ghosh, Central Avenue. He saw the X-ray plates and pronounced the pain to be due not to pleurisy in any way but to some form of rheumatism which has affected part of the spinal cord. He thought the final line of treatment should be determined after consultation with Sir Nilratan and Dr Brahmachari, and meanwhile I might take short-wave treatment for three or four days. I agreed to this. It gave me a little temporary relief.

Went to the University. Joges Babu told me that the V.C. would like us to meet at his house on Thursday evening to discuss the list of examiners for 1939. I thought such a step was unnecessary as the V.C. was interested in Muslim names only and it would be enough if that list was supplied to us beforehand. We could examine it and see how far we could accept it. Further the V.C.'s real attitude would not justify our going over to his place for the purpose mentioned. Khagen Babu, Nibaran Babu, Charu Biswas, Satis Ghosh, all agreed to this view. It was

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decided we should meet at my place tomorrow for discussing the examiners' list.

Thursday, 5 January, 1939

Felt a little better today and attended Court for two hours. Heard from Sures Ghosh that the arbitration matter had been postponed till the first week of February. Went to Dr K. B. Ghosh for electric treatment.

Went to the University. The Medical Regulations Committee Report was completed. Dr B. C. Roy was very angry about the proceedings of the Syndicate in circulation, which were not signed by him. These related to the affairs of Calcutta Muslim High School. It appeared that although the Hd. Master of the school had been suspended by the Secretary (rightly or wrongly) the Syndicate had been asked to direct the Hd. Master to re-open the school which the Secretary had closed. Dr Roy said this was a quarrel between the supporters and opponents of the Muslim League. I too was greatly annoyed at the suppression of the fact of the Hd. Master's suspension. Dr Roy said he would raise the question at the next meeting of the Syndicate.

Charu Babu, Dr P. N. Banerjea, Mr P. N. B., Satis Babu, Dr. Susil Mukherjee, Nibaran Babu, Joges Babu, and Khagen Babu met at my house. Before all of them had assembled, the V.C. called. It was rather embarrassing, for some thought that he too had been asked to come. Although I requested Azizul Haque to stay on, he did not. He, however, left with us his list of Muslim examiners. He was in a rather bad mood, we thought. After he had left, we started work but we could not finish today. We shall meet again tomorrow evening. They all dined at my place. Sumptuous feast it was, in honour of Khokon's birthday .

Friday, 6 January, 1939

Visitors made my life miserable. How I wish they would give me

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a little relief. A lot of work in the morning examining the list of examiners. Felt so tired at 11, could not go to Court. Went to Dr Ghosh at 2.30 p.m. From there went to the University. There was a meeting of the Arabic and Persian Selection Committee. Of the candidates interviewed, Dr Hamadani of Elphinstone College, Bombay, struck as the best. The meeting would be finally held on Tuesday. The Syndicate meeting was a stormy one regarding the resolutions proposed in circulation, about the Calcutta Muslim School. The V.C. tried to show his temper but abruptly cooled down when he saw we were determined—'blunder' had been committed, he admitted. At one stage he even threatened to resign ! Ultimately it was decided that the University would not interfere at this stage.

Saw H.E. at 6 p.m. for half an hour. Had a pleasant talk with him—(1) Vacancy in the India Council—fifty per cent chance of its being filled up by a non-Bengali, (2) Convocation, (3) App. Board, (4) Fellows who have not attended for a year, etc.

Met at 7.30 p.m. and continued discussion of examiners' list. Gilani sent Rs 360 for the two grandsons of Aga Kazim Shirazi who will receive their education at Asansol. Handed over the sum to Rector, St. Xavier's, for necessary action.

Saturday, 7 January, 1939

Boudi went to the cinema this evening. What a busy and hardworked day it has been ! The Syndicate met at 11 for the appointment of examiners. The V.C. was remarkably cool and reasonable. We took in some Muslims. On the whole the selections were happy and deserving. Biju was appointed a tabulator for the big examinations. The number of examiners was more or less based on 40,000 candidates for the Matriculation. The no. in English, Bengali and Mathematics became very large indeed. I doubt if one Hd. Examiner will be sufficient.

The meeting was over by 2. Went to Dr Ghosh at 2.15. Also attended Postgraduate sports later on. Returned home at

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4 p.m. Was dead tired. After taking tea and light refreshments, came and covered myself up in my bed. Spent the whole afternoon and evening by myself. Father-in-law came in the evening. He with his family returned to town this morning. They had all gone to Gonda as Pravat's father-in-law's guests. The new daughter-in-law has come. Satyananda Basu came to see me this morning asking me to preside over the Founder's Day of the Jadavpur College on 22 January. Promised to inform him tomorrow. He urged me to take some interest in its affairs. It is a national institution in the true sense of the term. He complained of lack of funds and of the usual party-factions.

The 'Career Lectures' commence on Monday. Tomorrow I must sketch out a short speech.

The question I suddenly find myself asking—has life been worth living ? The answer I give by means of another question—could I not have done better ?

Sunday, 8 January, 1939

Told Satyananda Babu that I would preside at Jadavpur on 24.1.39.

The morning passed receiving a large number of visitors. Mrinal Kanti Ghosh accompanied by Ajai Sarkar came and recommended the publication of *Viswa-Kosh* by the University. Promised to consider the mater. J. M. Roy came with his son and grandson, both reading at Dehra Dun. Subodh Mukherjee (ex-A.G.) came and pressed for the opening of postgraduate classes in French. Continuous talks with visitors aggravated the pain at the back. At 10.30, Sir Nilratan, Sir U.N. Brahamachari, Dr Sivapada, Dr K. B. Ghosh came and discussed the mode of treatment. I doubt if there is any effective remedy.

Finished meal by 12.30. Took complete rest till 4 p.m. B. came and talked for some time. Suresh Chakrabarti came in the afternoon. Heard from him that N.G. Majumdar's family was likely to be granted a decent family pension. Khan Bahadur Md. Jan (of Calcutta Muslim High School) came with a letter of introduction from Dr Roy.

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Did not go out in the afternoon. Worked for a while in the evening. Debi (Controller's Office) came and took down names of examiners. Father-in-law came in the evening. Discussed with him the question of *kabiraji* or homeo treatment.

Did not feel inclined to write a speech for tomorrow's 'Career Lecture'. Bholanath Chatterjee came with one of the apprentices working at Martin. He has been getting only Rs 30 for nine months ; has not been taught any special work ; is practically working as leave-reserve with no prospect of firm appointment. The matter requires looking into.

Monday, 9 January, 1939

Worked upstairs in the morning to avoid visitors. A large number of letters remains unanswered. Wrote a short speech for today's inaugural lecture. The pain shows no signs of abatement. Felt rather seedy due to a mild attack of influenza. Did not bathe. Had a light meal. Took rest till 2 p.m. Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment. He suggested for the next twelve days I might come every alternate day. Went to the University a little before 3 p.m. Sir P. C. Roy and the V. C. came punctually. The speeches were broadcast. Asutosh Hall was packed to suffocation. The function was over in forty-five minutes and was a great success. Our boys show their enthusiasm at first flush and then it dies down. At 5.30 went to the museum.

There was a controversy about the holding of the Health Exhibition. The matter will be decided at a special meeting on Thursday next. Met Ramchandran, N. G.. Majumdar's successor. Appeared to be a clever young officer. Had a talk with Mukul Dey. Abanindra Nath Tagore is willing to sell his collections to the University for Rs 60,000. Dey thought it was a bargain. Told him I would consider the matter and let him know.

Got a letter from Kucho. He has been transferred from Brahmanburia to Noakhali. This has upset him and he wants to resign unless the order is cancelled. Foolish young man—he does not know how difficult it is to get a job nowadays. Felt very tired on return. Took a dose of Arnica 100 brought by father-in-law.

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Antu joins school. He is immensely happy. Poor lad—how glad his mother would have been if she were alive today ! He is attending Class IV—may be too difficult for him.

Tuesday, 10 January, 1939

Went to Court and thence to the University. The Selection Committee in Arabic and Persian met. Nemezi was recommended for appointment on Rs 360. Siddiqui was keen on appointing Hamadani of Bombay. Had sent a telegram to Chandravarkar about him and the reply was favourable.

The pain is continuing. Have lost a good fountain pen.

Dr Baini Prosad came to see me in the morning, mainly to canvass further for the Bangalore post. Asked him to find out the conditions of service of Van Manen.

Wednesday, 11 January, 1939

Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment. Also saw Dr L. M. Banerjee with Dr S. N. Ray. It was arranged that a further consultation should be held. Went to Court. Felt uncomfortable all the while. Pasupati Deb rang up. He is greatly agitated about his own title. He is willing to spend Rs 25,000 if he gets a C.I.E.

A meeting of Sarat Chandra Memorial Sub-committee was called this evening but only one member attended. The committee has not shown much activity during the year.

Thursday, 12 January, 1939

Trustees' meeting at Museum at 5.30. Gurner was very strongly opposed to the Health Exhibition being held at Museum premises. Permission, subject to some conditions, was accorded by a majority of members.

Heard from Baini Prosad that Van Manen's appointment was annual.

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The I.Sc. practical examiners' list was revised by myself in consultation with N. C. Roy, Charu Bhattacharyya and Satis Ghosh. Senior B.Sc-passed demonstrators were put in larger numbers.

Saw a special edition newspaper in the evening about a serious railway disaster affecting Dehra Dun Express near Hazaribagh Road early this morning.

Friday, 13 January, 1939

Could not attend Court. Was feeling very seedy. Drafted a short Bengali address for Sarat Chatterjee 1st Anniversary meeting at Devanandapur. I am not certain if I shall be able to go to Hooghly on account of the pain.

Syndicate at 4.45. Two cases of extra canvassing: (1) alteration of age of a Mohamedan B.A. of 1933—Captain of Md. Sporting Club—although such applications are not entertained under the rules ; (2) application of Mrs Hasina Morshed's daughter (reading in Class VIII in 1939) to appear at the Matric Examination as a private candidate. Pramatha was a loud supporter of both—strange conduct ! Little does he realise how his unauthorised support places me in an embarrassing position. Ultimately both were rejected.

The Inspectors' report on the Calcutta Muslim H.E. School was received and postponed till the next meeting.

Latifur Rahaman came in the evening about his Taltolla School.

Saturday, 14 January, 1939

Corrected proofs of Devanandapur speech. Had accepted two engagements for today—one at Carmichael Hostel and the other at a meeting in honour of Sris Chandra Roy and expressed inability to attend the latter meeting on account of indisposition.

Later. Attended physical demonstration at Carmichael Hostel. The boys put up a really good show. The gymnasium was

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remodelled during my V.C.-ship. Said a few words by way of general encouragement.

Sunday, 15 January, 1939

There was a stream of visitors in the morning. Left for Devanandapur by car at 1.30 p.m. It is a village about a mile from Bandel Rly. Station. Arrived there at 3.15. 16th January, 1939 is the first anniversary of Sarat Chatterjee's death. There was a fairly large attendance. My speech in Bengali was much appreciated. On my way back, stopped for fifteen minutes at Dr Susil Mukherjee's house at Telinipara. Felt very tired on return but the pain was not worse.

Monday, 16 January, 1939

Attended Court and University. Heard at 4 p.m. of R. O. Raha's serious illness for which he had been removed to Medical College Hospital. At 7.30 p.m. received a telephone message from the hospital about his death. Was shocked at the news. He was one of the best souls I have come across—a most loyal friend. My indebtedness to him while I was in England cannot be repaid. I was glad to have helped him in getting the post of Residence Inspector which he held with undoubted efficiency till the time of his death. He was a staunch nationalist. He liked to call himself Ramen Raha—never felt proud of his 'Randolph Ogilise'. His last wish was that he should be cremated at Nimotallah according to Hindu rites, his ashes only to be entombed in the Christian burial ground.

Tuesday, 17 January, 1939

Attended Court and University. 3rd Career Lecture was delivered by Jones, of James Finlay & Co. The subject was Tea.

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The lecture was a clear and lucid one but there were not many useful suggestions of a possible career in this branch of industry. He referred only to agriculturists, coolies, clerks and managers. He admitted in the conversation that there were other stages where young Bengalis might find useful occupation e.g. blending, tasting, marketing, etc. and promised to deal with these in his published lecture.

Met a most interesting Bengali of about sixty-eight, Mr Harigopal Banerjee M.A., who has served in Nepal for a long number of years. A friend of his, also of Nepal, now dead, has left about a lac and fifty thousand with him to be given for agricultural education. He is willing to donate this to the University and has been greatly interested in my scheme for an Agricultural Institute. He would like to reserve this for Bengali Hindus. He asked me to prepare a scheme and send it to him within a week.

Rang up Sir N. N. Sircar. Shall see him tomorrow at 8 a.m.

Wednesday, 18 January, 1939

Saw Sir N. N. Sircar at his house at 8 a.m. Spoke to him about the application for special pension submitted by the widow of Nani Gopal Majumdar. He promised his whole-hearted support. Also spoke to him about the Keeper of Imperial Records for which Suren Sen is a candidate. He doubted if he could do anything in this connection. Heard from him that the Govt. of India Act was likely to be amended in course of 1939, giving authority to legislatures, like that of Bengal, to have concurrent jurisdiction over two-province universities such as Calcutta. This means the University's future is extremely grave.

Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment—pain less severe than before.

Khaitan and myself attended the Garden Party at Dum Dum in honour of Krishnamurti given by Babu Jatin Pal. Saw Krishnamurti for the first time. Frankly speaking, was not much impressed. Met a German lady who has arrived today at the invitation of Dr D. N. Moitra.

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Went to Flying Club, Dum Dum. Charming surroundings. Met Biren Roy there. While coming away, Dr Moitra and the German lady came. The lady remained with Biren Roy—Moitra going away but staying in the club ground ; some mystery it seemed !

Received telegrams about the death of Dr Ram Chandra Rao, Economics Lecturer. Heart failure.

Thursday, 19 January, 1939

Attended Court and University. In the afternoon presided over the first lecture of Krishnamurti. As a speaker he was certainly brilliant but there was not much in what he said. He was against all religions and dogmas and asked his hearers to learn to develop their self without fear. He will speak again on Saturday. There was a very large gathering.

Friday, 20 January, 1939

Did not attend Court. Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment.

The Syndicate meeting was a rather prolonged one. The V.C. has cooled down considerably.

Re. the Muslim H.E. School, it was resolved that the new Com. should include two University representatives and should be reconstituted by 31st March. The donor would get a life seat and four nominees if he made over the property to the school by a registered deed. The case of the suspended Headmaster should be considered by the new Managing Com.

Examiners in practical subjects for the I.Sc. were appointed. About eighteen temporary assistants were appointed of whom three were Muslims.

Paper setters for the Supp. Exam. were appointed.

Saturday, 21 January, 1939

Presided over a meeting of the G.B. of Asutosh College. In the evening Krishnamurti delivered his second and final lecture at

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Asutosh College Hall. He devoted himself mainly in answering questions. That he had a style of his own goes without saying, but his talks were almost without any practical basis. For instance, he expects there will be no race or nationality, but one human race throughout the world under one sovereign ! However, to hear him was a new experience. He leaves for south India tomorrow.

Sunday, 22 January, 1939

Had a large number of visitors in the morning. Saha and Suniti Chatterjee came to discuss the possibility of removing Van Manen from the General Secretaryship at the Annual Meeting of the Asiatic Society on 6th February. Arranged to have a further discussion on Tuesday afternoon with them, and also Baini Prosad, Hora and Jnan Mukherjee. The wife of Susil Mitra (son of Manmatha Mitra, eldest son of the late Sir Rames Mitra) came—she was Snigdhaprava Dutt and Mitra married her some years ago although his first wife was alive. That lady became a Mohamedan and was supposed to have married N.R. Dasgupta, Barrister-at-Law. The whole thing was a miserable tangle. Now Susil Mitra is in great distress, mainly due to his ill-health. His present wife is a distinguished graduate in Mathematics and she wants a job to maintain her family. Promised to consider her case.

Went to Diamond Harbour by car. Reached D.H. in an hour and ten minutes. Pleasant three hours.

In the evening Dr B. C. Roy, Pramatha, Dr P. N. Banerjea, Nibaran Babu met at my place to discuss a scheme for Agricultural Scholarships for which an endowment has been offered. The scheme has to be prepared in detail.

Monday, 23 January, 1939

Went to Court and University. Also to Dr Ghosh for electric

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treatment. The Committee to frame rules for the practical examination was a prolonged one, lasting for nearly an hour and a half. The V. C. was the Chairman but did not attend. It is amazing how utterly indifferent he is to the work and needs of the University—except in so far as Muslims are concerned.

Heard in court from S. N. Bhattacharyya that the big Reference, pending before Sachin Banerjee, which was proposed to be referred to my arbitration had somehow been miscarried. Bad luck indeed !

Tuesday, 24 January, 1939

Went to Court. University was closed for the Foundation Day. My memory naturally went back to the glorious celebrations of this day held in 1935, 1936 and 1937. How I wished that these celebrations would be regularly observed as annual functions and would introduce permanently a healthy atmosphere among the student community. Though the memory of the three great functions remains, their continuity has not been maintained.

In the afternoon, held a private meeting with Profs. Saha, J. N. Mukherjee, Baini Prosad, Suniti and Hora regarding the Asiatic Society's affairs. Examined the list of resident members and promised to consider whether attempt should be made to exclude Van Manen from the Council.

Received a letter from Radhakrishnan from Oxford. He has heard that my name is being considered by the Secretary of State for appointment to the India Council in place of Sir Ramaswamy Mudaliar. I doubt if anything will really come out of this : and will it be worth accepting ?

Mohendra Bagchi came. He says something definite is going to happen by April 1939.

Wednesday, 25 January, 1939

Saraswati Puja. Went about several schools and colleges in the

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morning. Visited Beltola Girls' schools for the first time—was greatly impressed with the buildings and equipments. The authorities are again pressing for affiliation upto Inter. Standard. About fifty people were invited to our house—besides the same number of ladies. Meal was over by 4 p.m. In the evening there was a variety programme—*Ramayan Gan* by a Faridpur party, musical performance by Nilu's *ostad* and magic shows by a young boy.

Thursday, 26 January, 1939

Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment. The pain has greatly subsided though it has not disappeared entirely. Subhas Bose's decision to contest for the Presidentship of the Congress is apparently going to create troubles. His opponent is Pattabhi Sitaramayya of south India. The latter is supported by Vallabbhai Patel, Rajendra Prasad, Bhulabhai Desai and others. Abul Kalam Azad was their first choice. He declined to stand. Sitaramayya who also had informed the Press about his withdrawal, was made to withdraw his withdrawal. Vallabbhai Patel and others have issued a statement which is most objectionable. Subhas must be kept out—that is the burden of their song. At the same time, Subhas's decision to contest is hardly proper. After all, re-election of the President is an exception and not the rule. And he should have agreed to seek re-election only if there was unanimity. For him to suggest that in the country's interests he should ask for re-election is an instance of self-importance which does not become him.

The election will be a unique one in the history of Indian political movement.

Friday, 27 January, 1939

Went to Court and University. Lecture on Coal by Mr M. N. Mukherji, coalmine proprietor and a Bihar M.L.A. The lecture

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was interesting and instructive. V. C. did not turn up today.

Antu has high fever today.

Saturday, 28 January, 1939

Went to Dr Ghosh for electric treatment. He had an X-ray taken—the result will be known on Monday.

The Annual Meeting of the Senate was short and dull. Had a talk with Dr Roy about the election of Subhas as President of the Congress. He made the astounding statement that there have been serious financial irregularities on Subhas's part. Monies received as purses presented to the President have mostly been appropriated by himself—while according to previous practice seventy-five per cent should have gone to the Provincial Congress funds and twenty-five per cent to the Central Fund. I wonder if this is a true accusation.

Attended the Founder's Day at Presidency College. Fuzlul Haq, the President, did not turn up till 5.30, although the function commenced at 4.30. Met many friends.

Antu's temperature continues.

Sunday, 29 January, 1939

Presided over the Founder's Day at Jadavpur National Council of Education. Large gathering—spoke in Bengali urging the authorities to extend the scope of their activities and not remain satisfied with running even efficiently a college of engineering.

Could not attend Sarat Bose's party in honour of his newly wedded son and daughter-in-law.

In the evening Dr Roy telephoned to inform me that from the votes already received, Subhas Bose was most likely to be elected as President of the Congress. It will be a great triumph. I wonder if it will split the Congress.

Antu's fever continues.

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Monday, 30 January, 1939

Attended Court. Syndicate meeting. V. C. wanted to be Chairman of P. P. Committee and Works Committee. The matter is not of great importance but it shows his mentality.

Dinner at Asutosh College at night.

Tuesday, 31 January, 1939

Sir Edward Benthall's lecture at 3 p. m. He referred to me several times in his speech. It was a good general speech but not very informative.

Antu is better today.

Received telegrams from Chandravarkar, Bhabha and Venkatesachar asking me to reach Bangalore on Friday. In the evening received a telephonic message from Chandravarkar repeating the same request. Have decided to leave tomorrow.

Wednesday, 1 February, 1939

A month has passed since the beginning of the new year. But no progress achieved. No hope fulfilled. Ever since 1924 which witnessed the passing away of my revered father and also the beginning of my active public life at a comparatively early age, I have never hesitated to give my very best to the University. I have neglected my profession which perhaps I have never liked so much. If I have served my University in an unstinted manner, she also has given me all that I could wish for. The Vice-Chancellorship came when I was just thirty-three and many other honours and positions came unsolicited. But now that age is advancing and responsibilities are increasing, I feel ever and evermore the need for a regular substantial income. I have no greed of wealth. Is there nobody who can utilise my services and pay for them ? I have no chance with the Govt. of Bengal, for I am too strong a Hindu for the present powers that be, and suffer

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as I might, may God give me strength and wisdom to maintain my integrity and independence and not sacrifice them for money's sake.
Id holiday !

Supdt. Archaeological section, Indian Museum, informed me last night that Sir L. Wooley—the foreign archaeological expert, whom the Govt. of India has brought out to India, was here and would like to visit Asutosh Museum. As I am leaving for Bangalore tonight, asked V. C., H. C. Roy Choudhury, the Secy. P. G., and P. N. Banerjea to meet him tomorrow.

Baini Prosad, Hora, Suniti, Saha, Guha and *Barda* were present at a discussion regarding the election of the Council of Asiatic Society on Monday next. I have spoken to about fifty members and I think we shall be able to carry Saha. My absence is regrettable but cannot be helped.

Left for Bangalore by Madras Mail. Alone in a first class compartment. Mind greatly disturbed. All going well but what about a regular income !

Thursday, 2 February, 1939

In train. Read Gandhi's statement on Subhas Bose's election carefully. I cannot conceal my disappointment at its tone and content. Why should he be so upset at Subhas's victory ? After all it was he who made him President last year. And if he honestly feels that Subhas has failed, he should let the public know why he so thinks—at any rate he must open his mind to Subhas at least. Further, he complains, Subhas's manifesto against the 'Seven Pillars of Wisdom' (Vallabbhai and Co.) was unjustifiable and unworthy. But what about the manifesto of these honourable gentlemen themselves; and what right had they to state that behind Subhas's back they (including Gandhi) had decided that it was unnecessary to re-elect him, and what is more, that S's election would be harmful to the interests of India. After all Subhas was still the President and if a large section of Congress people wanted him to seek re-election, there was nothing very

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serious about it. And Subhas's manifesto was a reply to the unjustified and unworthy statement issued by Patel and Co. — against which Gandhi has not a word to utter. This is not Democracy but a low type of Fascism !

Friday, 3 February, 1939

Arrived in Madras. Leaving for Bangalore at 1 p.m. Read some South Indian newspapers. The Andhraites are furious at the election of Subhas. Some fellow made an impudent attack on Bengalis generally—quoting Macaulay's remarks against them ! This is the fight for independence of India ! The British Govt. is mightily cunning—Provincial Autonomy has embittered communal and provincial feelings in a manner which will retard the attainment of a united and self-governing India. Everyone is glad to have a fling at Bengalis—look at Mr Sampurnanand (Minister of Edn., U.P.) speaking at a U.P. meeting where the question for consideration was Hindi and not the Bengali language. See *Prabasi* for this month where the matter is dealt with in detail. Giving an example of mixed jargon of Hindi-English, he quoted a remark alleged to have been made by an Englishman, his former professor, still happily alive at Benaras. This gentleman, the truthful minister said, had described in mixed Hindi-English that Bengalis were outwardly simple but most insincere at heart ! As an illustration, other statements could easily have been found ! Now, the old professor writes in the Press wholly contradicting this statement and stating this example of mixed Hindi and English he had heard two Bengalis indulging in, and they were referring to some retired L.G. of Bengal on the lines mentioned above !

And Mr Sampurnanand is a torch-bearer of truth and liberty !

Telephone call from Calcutta.

Saturday, 4 February, 1939

At Bangalore. Bhabha and myself both stayed at Bedford House.

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Venkatesachar came in the morning. Discussed the agenda of the Finance Committee in detail. The Budget disclosed a deficit. Expenditure has necessarily to be curtailed. Raman's attempt to duplicate the appliances at the Physics Workshop and practically to set at naught the Council's scheme for a Central Workshop will have to be considered. Found that the students had been instigated to take up an attitude of defiance. H. K. Sen has written a personal letter to me pointing out his difficulties in accepting the Chemistry Chair. His Committee may not even pay back his contribution to the Provident Fund. It seems the Institute has no chance unless Raman goes.

In the afternoon visited a dam for supply of electricity, constructed about twenty-five miles from Bangalore. A beauty spot. One of the most picturesque views I have ever witnessed. The journey was very comfortable.

Sunday, 5 February, 1939

At Bangalore. Meeting of Finance Committee lasted from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Expenditure side of the Budget was curtailed as far as possible. Even then it was a deficit Budget. Raman's action in exceeding his Budget grant and making purchases of appliances for the Workshop were regarded as irregular and unauthorised. This resolution was unanimously passed although the A.G. of Madras made a feeble attempt to support or save Raman, if he could.

Returned to Bedford House at about 7 p.m. Sent a telephone call to Calcutta. Could not get *Boudi* as she was out.

Monday, 6 February, 1939

Left for Calcutta in the morning. Came to Madras at 2 p.m. Dr B. B. De and Dr M. K. Maitra were at the station. Took my bath at the station and then went in Dr De's car. Saw Dr L. Mudaliar, who was equally disgusted at the turn events were taking at Bangalore. Had dinner at Dr De's house.

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Left Madras at 7.10 p.m. Got a coupé compartment. Asiatic Society's meeting in Calcutta. We won.

Tuesday, 7 February, 1939

In the train. Spent most of the time in reading. Journey not so uncomfortable. The weather was cool.

Wednesday, 8 February, 1939

Reached Calcutta at 10 a.m. Felt very tired. Did not stir out except in the afternoon when I went to the Maidan.

At Kharagpur station, read *The Statesman* and found that we had won at the Asiatic Society elections. Saha and Dr S.C. Law were elected in place of Hertzel and Mahindra. Heard details on arrival. Our supporters numbered about seventy-five; others had only twenty-five. Could have turned out Van Manen if we liked. But what we have done has been for the best. We can now face Van Manen in the Council with a clear-cut case against him.

Thursday, 9 February, 1939

Attended Court and University. Saha and Baini Prosad came. They are naturally very happy. They suggest a special meeting of the Council to consider the charges against Van Manen. The charges would follow the article published in the *Modern Review* and a Committee of Enquiry would be appointed to go into the matter.

After discussion and consultation it was decided that no special meeting need be called ; the date of the ordinary meeting (27th Feb) should be brought earlier and fixed on 23rd Feb— as we cannot attend on 27th on account of the meetings at Bombay. The requisition for this would be signed by ten members out of nineteen. Action is taken accordingly. The ten

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members are Baini Prosad, Saha, K.P. Biswas, Jnan Mukherjee, Suniti Chatterjee, Chopra, Pasricha, B.S. Guha and myself.

Friday, 10 February, 1939

Court and University. Asked Sudhir Dutt and Dr B.C. Roy to give me some materials for the Municipal Bill.

Finance Committees meeting—General and P.G. *Barda* is elected Vice-Chairman of the General Finance Com., and myself Chairman of the P.G. Finance Com.

Syndicate meeting. Again Calcutta Muslim School comes up. The headmaster and his supporters are asking for affiliation on their own account. Having withdrawn recognition from the school, I thought new recognition should not be asked for in the name of the old school. Azizul Haque did not see the point and pressed for its retention. He was not supported by the Syndicate and had to yield ultimately.

J. Ghandy of Tata's gave a Career Lecture. I was told he was the son of Mr M. Ghandy who was on the Bangalore Council.

Saw the remarks of Sir L. Wooley in the visitors' book after his visit to the Asutosh Museum. He was greatly impressed.

Saturday, 11 February, 1939

Stream of visitors. Attended meetings of Boards and Faculty of Arts. New B.T. scheme was postponed for a discussion with Assam representatives and others. Board met to recommend additional names for Honours examinerships and Head examinerships in English, Sanskrit and Bengali.

Bowbhat of Menukakas' youngest son.

Mr S. C. Bose came from Jhajha.

Anath returned from Madhupur with his family. He was better but looked in need of further change and rest.

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Sunday, 12 February, 1939

Over one hundred visitors in the morning. Purna De brought some MSS. on *Mahabharata* which he wants the University to publish. Went out for a drive in the evening.

Cleared up some old files.

Letter for Asiatic Society signed by ten members.

11 April, 1939

Puri

Just after two months I open my diary again. I have no explanation to give as to why I have neglected to fill these pages regularly during the last two months. Now it is impossible to write accurately, and date by date, the incidents and thoughts that came to pass within this period. I can only comment on the more important issues.

Brabourne

First comes the death of Lord Brabourne, which occurred after a brief illness on 23rd February at about 11 a.m. He was reported to be suffering from colitis but none suspected that the illness would prove fatal. He recovered from the attack but had a relapse a few days later. Col Anderson operated on him and he died three or four days after the operation. The bulletin issued after his death stated that he was suffering from cancer.

People have a strong suspicion that Anderson bungled the case. Some Indian doctor of eminence like Lalit Banerjee should have been called. Bidhan Roy told me that he had suggested this to Govt. House. Lady Brabourne had no objection, but the officials decided that it would be against well established convention to permit a black doctor to attend on a white Governor ! What does it matter if this does not prevent death---a

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Governor may be replaced but if a convention is broken, it cannot be repaired again! Of course, none can say that Brabourne's life would have been saved if an Indian doctor had been called in. But Anderson had the reputation of being a rash and hasty surgeon and a man of the type of Lalit Banerjee, if called at the appropriate time, might have made useful suggestions. It is however wise to bow down to Inevitable Fate in a situation such as this.

Brabourne's death, coming so suddenly, caused a deep stir in the public mind. No Governor had died in office in Calcutta previously and this perhaps added to the intensity of feelings. (Lord Mayo, Viceroy, was assassinated at Andaman; Woodburn, L.G. of Bengal, died in office; and Cornwallis, Viceroy, died at Ghazipur). Over and above this, Brabourne was a good soul and his kindness and simplicity of manners had endeared him to the hearts of the people. There was an unprecedented demonstration of sorrow, joined by people of all ranks and communities and Calcutta witnessed an unforgettable scene.

The news of his death spread shortly after 11 a.m. All courts, offices and institutions were immediately closed. Next day, Friday, was declared a public holiday. His body was removed from Govt. House to St. Paul's Cathedral, Chowringhee, in the evening and remained in state till Friday afternoon when it was taken in procession to St. John's Church (near Govt. House) where it was cremated [buried]. We went to the church on Friday morning and saw the coffin lying in state. I went to the church at 3 p.m. again and attended the ceremony which was conducted by the Lord Bishop. It was a simple and solemn ceremony which made an abiding impression on the minds of all. The Governor of Bombay, Sir Roger Lumley, a great friend of the Brabournes came flying from Bombay to attend the funeral. I followed the procession on foot from the church to St. John's Church.

On Saturday morning the Assembly met to express condolence. Azizul Haque was ill and the Dy. Speaker took the Chair. I spoke for a few minutes. I spoke again at the Senate meeting over which I presided in the absence of the Vice-Chancellor. The

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Senate did not transact any business but adjourned till 25th March.

Brabourne's death is a loss to Bengal. He was just starting to understand men and things. Lady Brabourne's mental condition can better be imagined than described. They have two sons, both studying in England. I lost in him a real friend. From the moment I had met him in Bombay in August 1937, when I went there to deliver the Convocation Address, till the end of his career in India, he extended to me his confidence and support which I shall always recall with pleasure.

Bombay

In February the Inter-University Board met at Bombay, followed by the Universities Conference. I could not attend the Board meeting as I was delayed in Calcutta on account of the Governor's death. I arrived in Bombay on 1st March. Nothing much was done at the Conference which, I am afraid, was rather a mediocre show. Azizul Haque arrived on the 2nd. He was suffering from a sense of inferiority complex and was anxious to speak on every matter. Result—he often made a fool of himself. I stopped with Chandravarkar who as usual was kind and cordial.

Assembly

The Assembly started its session from the middle of February. The Calcutta Municipal Bill came up just as I was leaving for Bombay. I spoke on the motion for circulation on my return from Bombay. There was an ugly demonstration by the Opposition on the day following my departure for Bombay. The programme was upset on account of the Governor's death and the Bill was being taken up, under a revised programme, on the dates fixed for non-official resolutions. The Opposition made this an excuse for attack and would not allow the Bill to be taken up on the days allotted to non-official resolutions. So great was the uproar that the Speaker had to adjourn the Assembly. The Bill was taken up after we had returned from Bombay.

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It is an amazing Bill. It provides to give separate electorates to the Muslims although since 1933, according to the Act of 1923, the system of joint-electorate has come into force. Further it seeks to redistribute the seats, giving increased seats to Muslims, Anglo-Indians, Labourers, and reducing the Hindus—who are in a clear majority in Calcutta in population, voting strength, and rates and taxes—to a permanent minority. The general seats are again to be re-allotted, special reservation being made for Scheduled Castes. The Bill has no other aim but to reduce the Hindus to a position of inferiority in a Corporation which affects a city where, whether one likes it or not, the Hindus predominate. The pity of it is that the Bill has not evoked that country-wide protest which it certainly deserves. The Hindus, thanks to the uncertain policy of the Congress, seem to be doomed ! The Bill was referred to a select committee and will come again before the Legislature after Easter.

Asiatic Society

The Council of the Asiatic Society met on 27th February. A Committee of Enquiry has been appointed with Lort-Williams in the Chair to enquire into various affairs, including Van Manen's work. The Sub-Committee met several times and a lot of material has been collected. The Society is really in a bad state and unless something is done immediately to rid the Society of Van Manen, there seems to be no hope for it. Lort-Williams was very much for Van Manen at first. He is now convinced that he has not done any work for the last three years. But he is not for any drastic action, for according to him Van Manen has rendered great services to the Society in the past. The Sub-Committee will meet after Easter. Meanwhile I have been asked to write a short interim report.

Bangalore

The outstanding news about the Science Institute is the

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appointment of Dr J. C. Ghosh as Director. This was in accordance with the report of the Selection Committee which consisted of Sergeant-Ed. Commr., Saha and Sir Md. Sulaiman. Ghosh has been appointed on Rs 2000 p.m. plus 3000 research grant, plus 10,000 non-recurring grant for his laboratory. Ghosh wanted facilities for his personal research work. We had first thought of appointing him in grade 1700-1800 and give him two scholars on Rs 100 each. In addition he would get the other facilities. Bhatnagar, who was opposed to the appointment, raised all sorts of objections, but ultimately agreed to the terms as finally agreed upon. The appointment is subject to the Viceroy's approval. Already a good deal of agitation has started, engineered by Raman and others who are soaked in anti-Bengali feelings. I hope the Viceroy will approve of the appointment and Ghosh will join as early as possible.

H. K. Sen has let me down badly. We offered him the Chemistry Chair—five years appointment on Rs 1650 in grade 1200–1750. He has not joined and has started asking for better terms. We have given him time till 6th April within which he must accept our original terms or say a final 'No'. He has, I understand, asked for a week's time. I wish he also had gone to Bangalore. But I doubt if he will.

2 January, 1944

Calcutta

Nearly five years later I take my pen and diary in hand. To attempt to write a correct summary of events during this period of acute stress and strain is not an easy job. My sphere of work has expanded beyond expectation and I have often been thrown in the midst of crisis, affecting people's rights and liberties, by a strange combination of circumstances beyond my control.

1939 continued to be a year of Hindu oppression at the hands of a communal ministry with Fazlul Haq at its head. Legislative and administrative measures were either adopted or advocated

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which aimed at a deliberate curtailment of Hindu rights. So long as such activities related to departments other than education, I had my protests recorded in the Assembly but did not find it possible to mobilise public opinion outside.

The reasons were mainly twofold. My tendencies lay in the sphere of educational administration and I did not feel attracted by the noisy and dusty career of a politician. I thought the best way to serve my country would be through the path of education. Secondly, I belonged to no active political party whose platform I could utilise for rousing public opinion outside the legislature.

The party which evoked my sympathy and support was the Congress. The Congress, however, lamentably betrayed the interests of the Hindus. In regard to the Communal Award, its policy of non-committal was a grave blunder. In Bengal it did not allow a coalition ministry and thereby greatly strengthened the Muslim League and in fact consolidated it. It hesitated to oppose Acts and Bills, avowedly anti-Hindu and anti-national, lest it should be dubbed a communal body. It represented Hindu electorates and yet it faltered in its sacred duty of defending Hindu rights. The ratio of communal representation in respect of the services; the defilement of Hindu images ; the suppression and supercession of better qualifications in respect of Hindus, and preferential treatment of Muslims in educational and other technical spheres; the passing of laws specially jeopardising Hindus; the encouragement of riots; attacks on Hindu women; were some of the glaring instances of our suffering.

Then came two black Bills. The Calcutta Municipal Bill and the Secondary Education Bill. It was really the latter which forced me out of my academic seclusion. Where education was made the plaything of party and communal politics, I felt it my duty to rouse public opinion. I approached both Sarat Bose and Subhas Bose and requested them to take up the Hindu cause. I asked them to do so, not on any ground of communal favouritism but in order to fight against oppression and injustice. The Congress in Bengal was already divided. Subhas being almost driven out of the Presidentship had started his rival Forward Bloc and had thrown out a challenge to Gandhi. The official

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Congress was decidedly the weaker body in Bengal. But both were reluctant to stand by the Hindu cause openly.

It was in Aug/Sept 1939 that Veer Savarkar came to Bengal and I was brought in contact with him closely. I toured in different parts of Bengal in September 1939. Meanwhile, some of us, headed by the Maharajadhiraja Bahadur of Burdwan, waited on deputation on the Actg. Governor of Bengal, Sir John Reid, regarding the communal ratio in services. Our request went up to the Governor-General and the Secretary of State but we got no protection as a minority community, and our interpretations of the Act and the Instrument of Instructions were brushed aside. We represented no political party yet and were merely a combination of individuals and minor interests, no matter how distinguished some of us claimed themselves to be.

Soon after this, as I said before, Savarkar came to Bengal with his new ideology of the Hindu Mahasabha. He presided over the Khulna Provincial Mahasabha Session. Being then greatly perturbed at the helpless position of Bengal Hindus—whom the Congress failed to rouse and protect—some of us were drawn to Savarkar's influence and it gradually took root. Nirmal Chatterjee, S. N. Banerjee, Asutosh Lahiry and others pressed me to join the Mahasabha.

My tour in eastern Bengal in September 1939, further made me realise how desperate the position of Hindus had become, and I saw how the spirit of resistance against an outrageously communal aggression was dying out—slowly but surely. There were then two Hindu Sabhas in Bengal—one that owed allegiance to the All-India body, and the other under B.C. Chatterjee's leadership. Sir M. N. Mukherji, N.K. Basu, Maharaja of Mymensingh, S. N. Banerjee, N. C. Chatterjee and many others came forward and we all conferred together. Ultimately, the two Sabhas joined together under the presidentship of Sir M. N. Mukherji and an agreement was reached between the two. We did this before the All-India Hindu Mahasabha was held in Calcutta in December 1939. Sir. M. N. Mukherji was Chairman of the Reception Committee and

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B. C. Chatterjee was General Secretary. This was a great beginning of a great struggle.

20 October, 1944

Madhupur

Thus I sit down again after a long interval, somehow to complete the narrative and to give a hurried survey of the last five years and a half. I do so in the hope that from now onwards I shall go on recording daily events without further interruption.

The Bengal Hindu Mahasabha was reorganised after the All-India Session. The Muslim League ministry, then in power, had steadily gone on with its well-planned activities for crushing the legitimate rights of the Hindus. The Congress was of course the most organised and representative political body and depended mainly on the support of the Hindus. It hesitated however to fight openly for Hindu rights as it would then be dubbed as a communal organisation.

In Bengal, Subhas Bose revolted against Gandhi and though he was elected President of the Congress he yet failed to carry the official Congress with him. There was a split in Bengal. One group including persons who were known to be in the Khadi group remained with Gandhi ; the other group acknowledged their allegiance to Subhas Bose and Sarat Bose. Subhas failed to form his Working Committee as practically everyone holding an important place within the organisation refused to work with him. Ultimately he had no option but to resign—Rajendra Prasad being elected by the A.I.C.C. to succeed him.

Subhas founded his Forward Bloc with what he claimed to be his fighting programme. He made allegations against those who were with Gandhi, stating they were for compromise and were not prepared for any big struggle. He could not gather under his banner a strong united group. Some were no doubt bold champions of liberty, but the main cementing force was animosity against the Gandhi party for one reason or other, rather than any well-knit political programme of their own.

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Gandhi was relentless against Subhas and was determined to oust him from the Congress. Subhas at Gandhi's behest had kicked out Khare and very soon he himself was thrown out of the Congress. His, however, was a great personality. His election as President, in spite of Gandhi and his big followers, gave him an added glory. That he was fighting Gandhi's 'moderate' policy also made him popular. He received tremendous ovation in many parts of India and it seemed that the Forward Block was going to be a great rival of the Congress and ultimately to capture it. In Bengal, Subhas's organisation functioned as the *de facto* Congress although it was refused recognition by the All-India body. The nominated executive—called the *ad hoc* Congress, could not gain any strength or prestige due to the hold that Subhas had on the province. In the Legislature, the Congress Party—well-known for its discipline and organised opposition—was at last split into two groups; one under Sarat Bose; the other under Kiran Sankar Roy, representing what came to be known as the Official Congress Party.

The Hindu Sabha was growing into prominence in Bengal amidst these conflicts within the Congress. Though Sarat Bose was perhaps more Hindu minded than any one else in the Congress, he faltered openly to fight against Muslim oppression. Apart from legislative and administrative inequities, specially regarding recruitment to the services, there were numerous cases of outrage on women's honour, and on religion, in different parts of Bengal, and the local officers being influenced on communal lines failed to give Hindus any protection.

The Bengal Hindu Mahasabha contested the elections to the Calcutta Corporation in March 1940, and we came into direct conflict with Subhas who ran the elections in the name of the Congress. The official Congressmen found themselves unprepared to fight against Subhas. Subhas and I had a talk one day about the political situation in Bengal. One evening Sarat Bose and we two had a long discussion. I asked them to take up the Hindu cause in Bengal so as to render it unnecessary for us to organise a separate political body. They expressed their inability to do so—first because they thought it might still further rouse

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Muslims, and secondly, because they themselves being well-known 'Non-Communal Congressites' could not openly do what I asked them to do.

Later on when we started organising ourselves, Subhas once warned me in a friendly spirit, adding significantly, that if we proceeded to create a rival political body in Bengal he would see to it (by force if need be) that it was broken before it was really born. This I considered to be a most unfair and unreasonable attitude to take up. This did not deter us from proceeding in our own way. Our conscience was clear. We had no personal ambition or desire to oust anybody. We knew what we proposed to do was very near the heart of the vast majority of Bengal Hindus, and we knew we would soon be able to march ahead.

Our obstacles were indeed formidable. Any nationalist Hindu consolidation was bound to be disliked by the British. We had also to encounter bitter opposition from the fanatical elements gradually gaining force under the banner of the Muslim League. We had further to meet resistance from three important elements within the Hindu Community—one being the Congress; the second being the Communist Party who would support the League but dub Hindu Sabha as communal and reactionary; the third being a section of Scheduled Castes who, having secured thirty seats in the Legislative Assembly through the Poona Pact, were being made to demand separate political entity antagonistic to Hindus and generally to the province. The Congress had by reason of its long career of service secured the loyalty of many a brave and selfless worker and this added to our difficulty in organising the Hindu Sabha in different parts of Bengal. We got men—but not all were of the true fighting type, able to rouse popular enthusiasm.

Keeping this background in mind, we ventured to contest the elections to the Calcutta Corporation. Not that we were itching for a fight. Due to the attack on Hindu rights, we wanted a strong Hindu Sabha party in the Corporation. We were prepared to work with Subhas and run elections jointly, provided we also worked as a team in the Corporation later on. Subhas agreed to this when he found that our strength was not entirely negligible.

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A Selection Board was formed, Subhas, Sarat Bose and Rajendra Ch. Dev representing Subhas's Congress, and S. N. Banerjee, Sanat Kumar Roychaudhuri and myself representing the Hindu Sabha.

The Board however came to an end due to Subhas's attitude. He had two men in view—one whom he was determined to support, and the other to oppose. Sudhir Roychaudhuri was an able person but a first-class intriguer, and undependable. He was somehow in the good books of Subhas. The other, whom Subhas hated, was Bidhu Bhusan Sarkar of Belliaghatta. We wanted that either both should be excluded or both be allowed to stand. We even offered that we need not have our candidates for these two wards, and let any one who liked stand and fight out the election. Subhas however was adamant, and one night after a long and heated discussion Sarat Bose broke the joint front.

The elections took place and we won about fifty per cent of the seats. It was a grand success. The Hindu Sabha gained tremendous prestige. There were free fights in many parts and we stood the ground very well. We had defeated Subhas whom Gandhi's followers in Bengal feared to challenge. Subhas, who as a great all-India leader had risen to such eminence, allowed himself to be dragged into the mire by reason of his scheming performances for keeping the Corporation under his thumb. His victory—so much of it as he got—could not place him in power.

Through the efforts of mutual friends we again started negotiations so that we might forget the past and put up a united stand for serving the Corporation. The Alderman must be captured if the Mayor is to be our nominee and the Committees of our choice. Here again there was a break-up due to Subhas's own tactics. He wanted himself to come as an Alderman. He asked me also to come. I refused flatly. I told him it was a mistake for any leader to grab power everywhere. We must divide work among able followers, and ourselves co-ordinate and work, specially outside. He had his own likes and dislikes and ultimately he broke away from us.

I was asked meanwhile if we would work with the League Party which also could control the nominated votes. I

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immediately said 'No'. I felt all along that a patched-up agreement, for some immediate narrow gain, between parties which were diametrically opposite to each other could never work. We would be fighting hard to get rid of the Muslim League ministry, and at the same time working hand-in-hand with the League for sharing power and patronage in the Corporation. This we thought would be bad for us and bad as a lead to the province.

Subhas had however different ideas on these questions. He must have the Corporation under his control. He failed to do so with us, on his terms. Within a few hours of his breaking away from us, he came to terms with the Muslim League and secured his coalition majority. The great liberator and leftist who regarded Gandhi, Jawaharlal and the rest as moderates, and branded them as 'compromise-wallahs', was not hesitant to install a League Mayor and placate the League for his own purposes. He was out to wage a relentless war on the League ministry in one breath; in another he was a warm and dear ally of the League while it ruled the Corporation. Could Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde do any better ?

21 October, 1944

Subhas's coalition with the League however was fully utilised by us. We had the indirect support of the official Congress group not because it loved us or agreed with us, but because its members knew that we were able to fight openly with Subhas whom they regarded as their big foe. We had the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Jugantar* with us entirely—and that also for similar reasons. *Bharat*, a Bengali daily, powerfully and ably edited and controlled by Makhan Sen was hundred percent anti-Subhas and supported us. The *Hindustan Standard* and *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, wielding great influence as they did, were controlled by Subhas and Sarat Bose. When Subhas and the League joined hands, we openly condemned it as both anti-Hindu and anti-national.

A public meeting was convened at the Town Hall with Ramananda Chatterjee as President. The meeting was broken up

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by the hired agents of Subhas led by Mrs Hemprabha Majumdar, Mrs Lila Roy, Narendra Narayan Chakrabarti and others, injuring Nirmal, veteran Nepal Roy and others. The Sabha lost B. C. Chatterjee who was duped by Subhas. Chatterjee lost in the election by three votes. Subhas and his men played with his emotions and made him feel we were against him. Chatterjee stood for Aldermanship as one of the Bose-League candidates. He was then a prominent member of the Sabha and this betrayal of his for a mere Aldermanship was a blow to us. We took disciplinary action against him and removed him at once.

Inside the Corporation, under the able leadership of N. C. Chatterjee, the Hindu Sabha Party, though in minority became a power to be reckoned with. It openly attacked and ridiculed Subhas who stood exposed. He called for all this by his own short-sighted acts and policy. During this period Surendra Mohan Moitra of Rajshahi died and we decided to put up Asutosh Lahiry as a Hindu Sabha candidate. The Bose group put up a son of Santi Sekhareswar Ray. The Hindu Sabha won with a large majority. The election took place in the middle of 1941, when the Dacca riots brought the Sabha into great prominence.

We, specially I, had no personal grudge against Subhas. Indeed I had for him admiration and affection, and genuinely believed that there was no other person who could come near him in the political field of India, specially Bengal. His trouble however was too much of first person singular and somehow failed to evoke respect and confidence among many who would have gladly followed him. He was so much exposed to public criticism and ridicule due to his unholy alliance with the League that he soon came down from the high pedestal on which his countrymen had placed him.

He had to do something to regain his position. He started a 'movement' to demolish the Holwell monument, was luckily arrested, and thus succeeded in attracting notice again. Due to reported illness he was released temporarily. He was so ill that he could not even receive visitors. He grew a beard and tried to look

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very ill, about to reach a state of complete renunciation. All this was faked, for he mysteriously disappeared on 26th January, 1941, from his Elgin Road residence. Before his arrest he had delivered some fiery speeches openly asking his countrymen to revolt and to remember that England's difficulty (due to the War) was India's opportunity. He was prosecuted for these speeches also, but was away before the case could be tried.

His sudden departure was a mystery. Some said he had committed suicide; others said he had gone into the jungles and the Himalayas from an inner urge for the Holy Sublime. A few dared assert that though his house was closely guarded, he had feigned illness and escaped incognito, intent on remaining in hiding during the period of the war. Few thought he could have established contact so successfully as to be able to go away to Germany. When he started talking from the enemy radio, people were surprised beyond measure. He has carried on relentless propaganda during the last four years. In March 1942 when Sir Stafford Cripps was here, it was suddenly announced that he was killed in an air crash, but it was soon contradicted. In any case his name is today associated with unique romantic adventure—a man, a patriot who so hated foreign rule and so eager to see his country free, that he risked all, and completely identified himself with the enemy. Whether his methods will lead to any success or not, it is extremely doubtful.

Today it must be admitted that taking him as he is, he is one of the foremost Indians of his time who regarded no means or method as bad if he felt he could thereby attain power to wrest the freedom of his country. If England wins—as she is likely to—and continues to hold her sway over India, it is doubtful if he will ever be permitted to return to India. A national hero in exile to serve his country's cause—that is how he appeals to many of his countrymen who may not agree with him always.

The Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal continued its work of consolidation. I toured Bengal on several occasions and did my best to stir up public opinion in our favour. A sense of defeatism enveloped the minds of many—all felt great wrongs were being done, but they did not know what to do. Bengal was really

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crushed under the Communal Award. A separate electrorate was provided with a vengeance for the majority community in Bengal. The number of seats allotted to Muslims was about forty-nine per cent in the Provincial Assembly while the Lucknow Pact of 1916 gave them forty per cent. The minority Hindus had no weightage; the non-official Europeans had about twenty-five seats. The Hindus were still divided under the Poona Pact; thirty seats going to the Scheduled Castes while only ten were provided under the original White Paper. Thus the Hindus for their advanced views and extreme nationalism, were so punished as to be thrown at the mercy of a highly reactionary communal majority, unalterable even by an appeal to the electorate.

After the 1937 elections, the Congress swept the polls so far as the Hindu seats were concerned. In Bengal, as elsewhere, the Muslim League did not cut much ice. Fazlul Haq was certainly stronger here and his Krishak Praja Party came to the Legislature with a fairly large representation. He defeated Nazimuddin at Patuakhali and it looked as if the reactionary elements among the Muslims had received a death blow.

Fazlul Haq, lovable and emotional as he is, was dying for power. He had been so long kept far away from Government Counsels, the Europeans not trusting him. He did not wish to fall into the arms of the League. He implored the Congress to form a coalition ministry in Bengal with himself as Premier. If this had been done, Bengal would never have gone under the heels of League-cum-British conspiracy. The province would have developed into a strong and healthy province with the common efforts of representive Hindus and Muslims. The High Command of the Congress did not allow this to be done. Congress policy regarding acceptance of office was still uncertain. Sarat Bose himself was even then deluding himself with such a declaration, 'The Congress has come to the Legislature to end the Constitution and not to work it.'

Fazlul Haq could not wait indefinitely. He joined the League and a solid Muslim front was created. N. R. Sarkar, B. P. Singh Roy and Maharaja of Cossimbazar were the Caste Hindu

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ministers. They could hardly exercise any restraining influence. The tiger had tasted blood and fanatic zeal was let loose on the province. Fazlul Haq was made to dance as the clever Leaguers like Suhrawardy, Sahabuddin and Nazimuddin wanted him to. Using him as their cloak, they organised themselves and the League effectively, and carried on ruthlessly their campaign of denuding Hindus of their rights, on which alone they thought they could build their Islamic structure.

The Congress Party opposed the ministry vigorously, but the ministry used the immense patronage at it disposal for consolidating its position. If the Congress High Command and the Bengal Congress had joined with F. H. in 1937, Bengal would have been a different province altogether. In other provinces, after three months, the Congress did accept office, but Bengal was already thrown at the mercy of European [British]-cum-League domination. Even outside Bengal, where Congress was in majority by itself, it did not act prudently or in a statesmanlike way. It was not prepared to co-operate or form a coalition with anyone. It must rule as a single party. The Muslim League and Mr Jinnah begged of the Congress in U.P. to be allowed to nominate Muslim ministers. Mr Nehru refused this. Only Congress Muslims were selected. Now in 1944, to placate the League, Gandhi and Rajagopalchari were prepared to agree to the principle of India's partition. If in 1937 they had only allowed coalition ministries with the League, India's political history would have been different.

Bengal has suffered terribly under the Communal Award. Another blow was the decision of the British Govt. to keep about sixty-five millions of Bengali-speaking people outside Bengal. If this large number, and the fertile territories are brought into Bengal, Bengal ceases to be a Muslim majority province. We are thus artificially reduced to a minority and having done so, the Br. Govt. has further inflicted the Communal Award on us, giving special protection to the majority community backed by non-official European support. The only way to fight this is to organise the Hindus and to establish co-operation with those Muslims who feel that Bengal's hope lies in joint work between the two communities.

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In 1940 and 1941, the parties in opposition inside the Assembly worked together. Outside it, the Hindu Mahasabha kept the public fully alive to the dangers lying ahead. We had no intention to pick up a quarrel with anybody. We asked the Hindus to organise themselves and sink all petty differences. The Hindus felt embarrassed to call themselves so lest they would be branded as communal. This complex we gradually tore away.

In 1940-41 there were serious allegations of the oppression of the Hindus specially in Noakhali. In 1941 the Dacca riots had broken out. At this time Governor Sir John Herbert summoned a conference of party leaders to consider how communal relationship could be improved. We asserted that so long as a single-party communal ministry remained in office, the real cause would remain undisturbed. A coalition ministry, enjoying the confidence of as large a section of Hindus and Muslims as possible, could alone help to inspire good feeling and understanding between the two communities.

While the conference was meeting at Govt. House, the riots broke out. The whole city of Dacca was in flames. In the town the Hindus were more or less prepared to resist the attack. There were accusations on the part of the Hindus that the Police was helping the Muslims, and by indiscriminate arrests preventing Hindus from defending themselves. Still 'tit for tat' was the prevailing rule in Dacca town. I went there as the first Hindu non-official from outside. It was at first suggested by the Governor that the Muslim ministers, against whom there were allegations of instigating and fomenting the riots, would not go to Dacca; nor should I, the situation being left in charge of the local officers.

Fazlul Haq, the Nawab of Dacca and Shahabuddin however went to Dacca. I followed Haq in a private plane driven by a Marwari friend, Lohia. Before I got down I could see the whole city in flames. Blair, Commissioner, at first would not allow me to enter Dacca as I was like a red rag to the bull, and the Muslims would become uncontrollable if I remained there. I told him the Governor knew I was coming and he had no right to stop me. However I was ultimately allowed to go. I stayed there for

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four or five days. We organised the Hindus, arranged for relief, and helped to bring pressure on the officials so that they would not show any partiality. I stopped at Dr R. C. Majumdar's (Vice-Chancellor) house. In the town the Hindus could not be beaten.

Early in April, that is, a fortnight later, a terrible devastation took place in the rural areas in the Narayangunge sub-division. Nearly eighty villages were burnt and looted; about 3000 people fled for their lives to the nation State of Tippera. Hindus were about fifteen per cent here; Muslims fifty-five per cent. Leaflets were circulated that Pakistan had come, Muslim rule had been re-established and Hindus if they chose to live, must live as converts to Islam. Fresh conversions took place. A British A.D.M. with a small force was attacked and severely assaulted. It took days before the Govt. could control the situation. We sent relief parties from Calcutta. I myself went a few weeks later and went to Agartala to thank the Maharaja personally for his generosity. These riots and disturbances opened the eyes of the Hindus considerably and the work of the Sabha received a great impetus.

In 1939 after the war was declared, the Congress withdrew its ministries from the provinces. No movement was started, but there were arrests everywhere. Mr Jinnah called upon the Muslims to celebrate a Day of Deliverance throughout India. He circulated wild stories of Muslim oppression at the hands of the Hindu Congress. These were given wide publicity everywhere. The oppression of Hindus by the Muslim League ministries was never given wide circulation. But even then there was no talk of Pakistan or partition of India.

6 December, 1945

Calcutta

Again after a long lapse of time I sit down, while lying ill in Calcutta, to continue the narrative. During the last one month

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momentous events have happened which may affect my future work. That, I shall discuss later in an appropriate place. Let me proceed with the narration of events.

In March 1940, the Muslim League passed in Lahore its resolution on Pakistan. Fazlul Haq was the author of this resolution. So long, Muslims were making various demands for the protection of their rights as an important minority community in India. Such demands were in many cases unreasonable and were based on the perpetuation of the principle of communalism in the political life of India. But in Lahore, the Muslim League, as the best organised Muslim party in India, demanded that India must be partitioned with separate sovereign zones, depending on the wishes of the Muslims where they were in a majority. It was stressed that the Muslims were a separate nation, and they must have a homeland of their own in India where the flag of Islam would fly in all its glory. This was the Pakistan demand. All responsible men, specially belonging to the Congress, laughed at the idea and said it was a mere stunt. Very soon however the idea spread and was fanned by the fanatical zeal of Muslims in all parts of India.

In provinces where the League was in power, Muslim consolidation went on in full swing. The League was sought to be organised on a broad scale and received full support from official agencies. In provinces where the Congress was in power, the bureaucracy gained full supremacy on account of the resignation of the Congress ministers, and there was an unconcealed conspiracy between the bureaucracy and the League to deprive the Hindus of their legitimate rights in those areas also. Thus the Hindu point of view as such had practically none to support it. The Congress was following a peculiar policy. After the war broke out, it could not make up its mind whether it would support or oppose the Govt. Its declared attitude against Fascism and its pro-China policy made it say things vehemently opposed to Germany. Indeed, Gandhiji went to Linlithgow and expressed his profound grief at the prospect of Westminister Abbey being bombed—if such acts of vandalism took place, what would India do with her freedom ?

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Linlithgow's efforts to get support from the political parties did not succeed. H.M.G. was not prepared to offer anything substantial—the Executive Council was to be expanded ; not even wholly Indianised, and party representatives would be taken in the Council to act under the present rigid Constitution-- that was all that H.M.G. could offer to India. If at this period a generous and just gesture had been made, Indo-British relationships would have undergone a complete change. Anti-British feeling, though existing, was not so markedly hostile as it became later on.

H.M.G. thought India was pro-Germany. In fact, barring a limited number of people, who might have felt otherwise, the general viewpoint has all along been that India must have her own freedom to shape her destiny according to her will. India never wanted a change of masters. Later on, however, finding that Britain was not prepared to give India a fair deal, and being unable to coerce Britain to do the right thing, Indians felt happy that she was being bled white by Germany. It was something like a vicarious enjoyment, but it never signified India's desire to submit herself willingly to Nazi, or Fascist, or Japanese domination. British representatives never learnt to appreciate this point of view of Indians.

The Hindu Mahasabha was steadily gaining influence on account of the League's activities and the failure of the Congress to stand up for the rights of the Hindus. In 1940, our session was held in Madura, Veer Savarkar presiding. The Mahasabha had meanwhile passed resolutions clarifying its position vis-a-vis the war. It stated clearly that it did not believe in the so-called war aims of the Allies so long as they did not lead to the recognition of India's free status. It made no distinction between Fascism and Nazism on the one hand and Imperislism on the other—both aimed at domination over weaker countries, though their methods were different.

Veer Savarkar was insistent on one point from the beginning. Any preparation for India's defence, no matter who the aggressors were, must not be lightly rejected. Particularly, he was keen that Hindu youth must take full advantage of the

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military training in land, air and sea, offered by the Government. Already recent tendencies indicated that the Muslim strength in the Army was higher than what Muslim population warranted.

For the last 150 years Indians had been kept unarmed and untrained. The Government was afraid of trusting Indians with arms, hence the Arms Act. Now the Government finds that without trained Indians, modern warfare was impossible to be conducted on a big scale in India. If Hindus refused this offer either on the plea of Congress non-violence, or non-co-operation, Government would not wait for them but would either recruit Muslims and non-Hindus or bring foreign troops from abroad. On the other hand, if Hindus in large numbers were militarised, they would not only gain in skill, discipline and experience but would one day be able to serve the country's cause—either as the National Army of a free India or an army that might revolt and make India free. In fact we gave expression to these sentiments in public while we advocated a policy of militarisation.

Today when the facts relating to the Indian National Army and Subhas's leadership are becoming known, who dares deny that the lead given by the Mahasabha was right and proper. The Mahasabha demanded along with the Congress that there must be a real transfer of power to the people. The Congress also made a similar demand but was not prepared to launch a struggle yet. Subhas held a different view but was ousted from the Congress. The Madura session of the Mahasabha passed a resolution advocating direct action if the demand of the people was not met. Unfortunately the leaders sabotaged this decision. In Calcutta a special session of the Hindu Sabha All-India Committee met towards the middle of 1941. The Dacca riots had broken out meanwhile. On some pretext or other it was decided that the resolution passed at Madura should be held in abeyance.

Meanwhile I was touring in the Punjab. I found there was a new awakening among Hindus and many were prepared to rally under the banner of the Mahasabha provided a vigorous and fighting programme was adopted. The withdrawal of the Madura resolution was a severe blow on the prestige of the Mahasabha, and made people feel that we could only talk big but

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ran away from the field of action. This had a very disheartening effect on my mind. I had joined the Mahasabha in the full belief that we would not hesitate to fight the Government at the right moment and thus pave the way ourselves towards national freedom. The Congress leaders who were arrested had been released, but aparently they were not prepared for immediate action. They had withdrawn from the Legislatures.

In Bengal they were divided. Due to differences with Subhas Bose those who owed loyalty to him disobeyed the mandate of the High Command. Sarat Bose and his group even refused to resign their membership of the Legislature and formed themselves into a separate party within the Legislature. Outside it, the old Congress party which followed Subhas remained a separate entity and an *ad hoc* Committee was appointed by the High Command to represent what came to be known as the Official Congress. In these circumstances the Bengal Hindu Mahasabha was going ahead. We had friendly relations with both sections and tried to preserve a united front whenever occasion demanded it.

We had a stirring agitation on the Calcutta Municipal Bill and the Secondary Education Bill. I was more intimately connected with the second and indeed did my best to make the agitation fruitful. The Bill was held up on the floor of the House when all attempts at an honourable settlement failed. Here also my attitude was dictated by the actualities of the situation. I was not for any form of communalism in education. I felt however, that if the Muslims were determined to give educational administration an aggressively communal turn, it was not for us, Hindus, to try to save them. They would not listen to us in any case. We should demand therefore that we must have our own Board to look after our education. Although we were a minority in the province, eighty per cent of the school-going population was Hindu, eighty per cent of the total expenditure on secondary education was borne by Hindus, and ninety-nine per cent of the schools owed their birth or continuance due to Hindu generosity. We were therefore entitled to say, 'You do whatever you like with the education of your boys, but we do not believe that education

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should be made the plaything of communalism' or, 'Politics must have the freedom to shape the education of our children according to our own light and judgement, and the State must give grants according to the number of pupils attending our schools.' This idea was not at first acceptable to a section of Congressmen who thought they were being slowly dragged into the net of Mahasabha politics. But fortunately the majority agreed, including Sarat Bose and Haren Chaudhuri, and our demand was voiced accordingly.

Meanwhile, there was a great stir in the province on account of the census operations. The Congress had done untold mischief by boycotting the Census of 1931. A large number of Hindus were thus rendered indifferent and the entries made were hardly dependable. On the census figures however our political fate depended, and the loss we thus suffered was incalculable. In 1940 we took up a firm attitude from the Mahasabha. Our agitation was well organised. We wanted to check the growing tendency among the Scheduled Castes people to regard themselves outside the Hindu fold—their antagonism to Caste Hindus was being slowly nurtured on political consideration—Caste Hindus were the enemies of the Sch. Castes' progress etc. We wanted that Hindu solidarity must grow; we wanted that caste prejudices should disappear. We therefore declared that we should not indicate our castes but call ourselves Hindus in our census returns. This was bitterly opposed by a section of Scheduled Castes people. Still our propaganda had great educative value. We not only got all Hindus take an active interest in the census but united them as far as possible.

Of course Fazlul Haq as Premier took up the cudgels against us. He discovered in our work a sinister design to reduce the Muslims of Bengal to a minority and carried on a most bitter and fantastic propaganda. He abused Hindus as a class and was most offensive. A huge protest meeting was held at the Town Hall, presided over by Sir N. N. Sircar. Fazlul Haq's dismissal was demanded and there was a great public agitation. This, however, did not mean Fazlul Haq was having an easy time with his colleagues either in the ministry or the legislature. In 1937 he defeated Nazimuddin and the League came in a minority.

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There was no love lost between Haq on the one hand and Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy on the other. Haq was anxious for a Congress-Krishak Praja settlement. Indeed the Krishak Praja Party under Haq's leadership had a majority of Muslim seats with it. The Congress however bungled and refused to accept a coalition ministry in Bengal in 1937. Haq betrayed his party and in order to become Chief Minister joined with Nazimuddin, Suhrawardy and others under the banner of the League. Some still remained with the Krishak Praja Party. For a time Shamsuddin Ahmed who was the next in command remained aloof. For some time he also joined the ministry but had to come out, partly on account of the strong attitude taken up by some of the nationalist elements within the party. Haq was fully utilised by the League stalwarts.

A bitter communal atmosphere was spread in Bengal and outside by Haq who was notorious for his irresponsible utterances. All the anti-Hindu misdeeds of the ministry, which were possible because of the dishonest machination of the reactionary Leaguers, were openly justified by Haq whose defiant and arrogant attitude towards the Hindus was intolerable. Thus, Leaguers who never liked Haq, used him as their convenient tool for stabilising their position, and that of the League and defenders of Islam. Huq was the only leader who had a real mass appeal and he played into the hands of persons who posed as his friends but were really his arch enemies.

Haq discovered towards the latter half of 1941 how dangerous his position had become. Left to himself he is one of the most lovable personalities one may think of. He indeed shines in the company he keeps. A good batch of friends and followers may help him to do enormous good to his people and country. A bad lot may lead him to hell. As I said of him once, he is at once an asset and a liability of no mean order. In any case as soon as he discovered in 1941 that he was going to be stabbed in the back by his colleagues and some co-workers, he wanted to get out of the ministry, but in a way which would again reinstall him as Chief Minister. Sarat Bose was then a Congress rebel and was the master of his own group. Mainly through his efforts, Haq decided to help in the breakdown of his own ministry.

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In August we arranged to table a no-confidence motion. Speaker Azizul Haque fell ill conveniently and sent Ashraf, Deputy Speaker, to preside on that momentous day. He suddenly adjourned the House without allowing the motion to be moved. There was a great uproar. The Secondary Education Bill was then being considered. The House was later prorogued and somehow the ministry was saved.

In November troubles started again. The ministers doubted each other's loyalty. Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy were not prepared to give Haq another chance to inspire a no-confidence motion. They expected a majority for themselves and wanted to take the bull by the horns. They charged Haq with treachery, and were not prepared to work under him. The ministers resigned. It was rumoured that Governor Sir John Herbert had given an assurance that Nazimuddin would be asked to form the next ministry. The Governor had to call in the Party leaders.

Meanwhile a definite majority of members, numbering about 127, had signed and declared their readiness to follow Haq. The official Congress Party under Kiran Sankar Roy's leadership was also not in favour of the League. We threw out a challenge to Herbert. Whatever his personal desire or the advice of the I.C.S. clique might have been, he dared not flout the will of the majority of the Legislature, and ultimately decided to ask Haq to form the ministry.

Early in December 1941 Japan declared war and Herbert decided to summon Haq on or about 10th Dec. There was difficulty about Sarat Bose. He was most anxious to become minister himself, preferably in charge of the Home Department. Herbert, I found, was most reluctant that Sarat Bose should himself became a minister. He could not dream of him as a Home Minister. Bose then thought of Finance. Herbert told me on 10th Dec. that Bose should be dissuaded. Bose was however adamant. In fact I had suggested to him that he and I should not accept office but allow our party men to go in. He would not listen to this. The ministry could not be formed for the part he played—and he was anxious he should himself take a leading part of moulding the administrative policy of the ministry.

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There was a sudden bombshell. The Government of India decided to arrest Sarat Bose. Sarat Bose came to know of this through some secret agency. The ministry could not be completely formed as the names were not ready. Sarat Bose was so anxious that the ministry should be formed, even if he was arrested, that he suggested to me that Haq and I should be the first set of ministers.

The Nawab of Dacca was bagged at this time. He was till then with the League. He was not elected the Party leader and Nazimuddin was selected instead. The Nawab of Dacca, another lovable gentlemen, absolutely non-communal, most generous in instinct, was utterly undependable and devoid of principle. He took the jump and came to us. Sarat Bose suggested, and we agreed, that the first batch would consist of Haq, Dacca and myself. On the 10th, this was decided. On the 12th, we were to take our oath. On the 11th, Sarat Bose was arrested under Regulation III, under orders of the Government of India.

I received the shock of my life when I heard of this from his own lips at his house when I went there in the afternoon. Haq and I went to Government House and earnestly pleaded with Herbert. He was the pink of courtesy but pleaded inability as this was an order passed by the Viceroy. We wanted that the matter might wait till the Viceroy's arrival a week later; meanwhile he might be kept detained at his own house. This too was rejected. With great difficulty we could prevent his removal to jail that very day. All our enthusiasm vanished; we felt helpless and dejected. The next day Bose was removed to Presidency Jail. His arrest, it was notified, was due to suspicion regarding his contacts with Japan.

The ministry had yet to be formed. There was no one yet from Bose's party, and the ministry could not remain in office for a day without the active support of the Bose group. I had a long talk with Bose the next day in jail. Haq was present. He said his party was reluctant to join the ministry in view of its leader's arrest, though the party would support the ministry which was ushered into existence mainly through the leader's effort. Bose asked for my opinion. I was firm and definite. I could never join the

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ministry if Bose's party was actively out of its composition. Ultimately it was decided that the Bose group would be represented by two ministers.

Regarding choice of names the decision was left to Sarat Bose. I was told by him that though he did not think much of Santosh Bose, his name must be included as Deputy Leader, 'otherwise he would die of heart failure.' As regards the second name, he was evidently in favour of Pramatha whom he used to call his 'Prime Minister'. There were many who thought that Rai Harendranath Chaudhuri should be one of the ministers—for he was, taking all things into consideration, perhaps the most outstanding person in the Bose group who could worthily fill the minister's office. Barada Pain was an aspirant ; Sarat Bose mentioned his name but said he was agreeable to Pramatha's selection. Pain, he thought, might be selected as Deputy Speaker.

The Governor's interview with Haq was fixed sometime near about noon one of those days and I communicated to Haq, Sarat Bose's final choice over the telephone, when Haq was waiting for my message at Govt. House. That afternoon the Governor sent for Santosh Bose and Pramatha. The Scheduled Caste member was Upendranath Barman. We wanted to take two Scheduled Caste men but there was no agreement regarding the second name which was to be that of a *Namasudra* member. The result was, our Party got only one representative in myself. The Muslim names were chosen by agreement, though I could not discover the real reason for the selection of Abdul Karim—who was in the Upper House—a decent man but with no special claim whatsoever. The newspapers were out with information regarding the personnel of the ministry.

That night I attended the Viceroy's dinner at Government House. I insisted on going in *dhoti*. There was some objection from Government House but I politely said I would not otherwise attend. I did go in *dhoti* at last and there was a mild sensation. On return from Govt. House after midnight and just before I was to retire, a letter was brought to me from Fazlul Haq's house by Charu Roy or Suren Biswas written by Sarat Bose from jail. Sarat Bose wanted to withdraw Pramatha's name

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and substitute Barada Pain. It was a pathetic letter which is still with me. Barada Pain was waiting in the car. Fazlul Haq was at his wit's end and did not know how to tackle the situation. I rang up Pramatha and heard he had gone to Santosh Bose's place. I rang up Santosh Bose and found both were in great suspense. This was natural. Pramatha was not an applicant for the post. Sarat Bose was very keen on him. Having once sent up his name to the Governor and then later the Governor having interviewed him—which was already widely published—how could Sarat Bose withdraw his name at this stage and humiliate him ? I allowed the night to pass off. Next morning both Haq and I went to the jail. I explained the situation to Bose who readily understood it. He telephoned Pain in my presence. Pain was very rude. He would not listen. Bose almost in a begging tone asked him not to press his claim. There was apparently some reason why Bose was so nervous about Pain. Ultimately Pain apparently cut short the conversation—he even threatened resignation. Pramatha's name remained in the list.

5 January, 1946

Madhupur

Came here on 27th Dec. after being suddenly taken ill on about 24th November. Mother is with me. Antu is also here. Santu came twice from Asansol. Taking complete rest. Events leading to my illness are recorded elsewhere in Bengali [see translation of Bengali Diary]. In this book I shall try to complete the narrative which is only partly finished. I shall dictate notes to Baridbaran who is with me. Regarding contemporary events, I shall keep separate notes in another small diary.

Trying to concentrate on prayer. One song from *Sakta Padavali* which I have liked and committed to memory is :

Mother Kali should be worshipped with the nectar of one's ardent devotion. Ostentatious worship is wholly unnecessary

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since it makes one proud. Nor are traditional offerings, candles, lamps or chandeliers at all necessary. Ramprasad says, one should simply light up the lamp of devotion in one's mind and let it blaze day and night. The evil passions will be consumed by the fire of such a burning devotion.

(Song by Ramprasad, a devotee of Kali; translated from Bengali)

Dictated to Baridbaran

Such in brief were the circumstances under which the ministry was formed in December, 1941. There was intense relief in the public mind, specially among Hindus, at the termination of the League ministry which had caused immense injury to them between 1937 and 1941 and had also retarded real progress of Bengal as a whole. For the first time the ministry depended for its existence on the combined support of elected Hindu and Muslim members and was backed by Anglo-Indians and Indian Christians as well. The League party under Sir Nazimuddin had only about forty supporters and had as its allies, the European members of the House who never liked a strong Hindu-Muslim combination in the province. Sarat Bose's absence was keenly felt. That was a real handicap. But even this did not break our solidarity and we were determined to give the province a real chance to recover its lost position.

Our main handicap, however, was an unsympathetic bureaucracy ,headed by a cheaply clever and third-rate Governor. From the very first day I realised that before us there was a difficult and rugged path full of obstacles, and I doubted if I could really be able to do any solid work.

In December, 1941, another event happened whose importance was considerable. The Hindu Mahasabha session was to have met at Bhagalpur under the Presidency of Veer Savarkar. The Bihar Government under the guidance of Governor Stuart started creating trouble since August or September. The Id Festival had fallen sometime towards the end of December and the Government was not prepared to allow the Mahasabha

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session to be held during that period. We were not agreeable to abandon the session altogether or to put it off till a later month. That was inconvenient and derogatory. We were prepared to shift the date by a few days so that the session and the Muslim festival might not clash with each other. But this gesture was misunderstood as a sign of weakness and the Government decided to ban the session. The All-India Working Committee resolved that the session must be held in spite of the ban and arrangements were ordered accordingly. I was then the Working President and also a Bengal minister. It was generally felt that I should remain in Calcutta and not make any effort to violate the ban.

Enthusiasm was great in all parts of India and thousands flocked to Bhagalpur to attend the session in defiance of the ban. We made effective arrangements to give the movement a start from Bengal. Leaders like Moonje and Khaparde came to Calcutta and left for Bhagalpur from here. Savarkar, the President-elect was arrested at Gaya. Other leaders were arrested in or near Bhagalpur. I had not disclosed what I was going to do. After Savarkar's arrest I decided to leave for Bhagalpur, and spoke to the Governor accordingly. I offered to resign my ministership in case the Governor felt embarrassed. He however did not ask for my resignation. As soon as it was announced that I was proceeding to Bhagalpur in spite of the ban there was a great stir. The event was unprecedented in the sense that till now no minister, while in office, had openly declared his intention to violate a ban which he regarded as unjust and improper.

I was given a hearty send off at Howrah and proceeded in a reserved second class compartment along with Babu Padmaraj Jain and others. I was met by some police officers at Colgong and was asked to detrain there. I insisted on authority being produced for this order. Ultimately I was served with an order under Rule 26 of D.I.R. and was taken to the Dak Bungalow where I was kept detained, guarded by armed police. There was a country-wide sensation at this event and our session received the widest possible publicity. Thousands were arrested and the

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whole of Bhagalpur was astir with enthusiasm. Batches of youths met in different places in the city and attempted to read the Presidential address. The greater the arrests, the more stubborn was the resistance offered. Bhai Parmanand, Gokulchand, Moonje, Khaparde, N.C. Chatterjee, Raja Maheswar Dayal, Harischandra, Keshab Chandra, Naidu, Mehr Chand Khanna and all others were living together in Bhagalpur jail. I was let off after four or five days, and from Colgong I came to Madhupur via Bhagalpur and Kiul. Huge crowds were waiting at every station and the enthusiasm was tremendous.

Early in January, all who were arrested were released but the enthusiasm did not die away. I asked Savarkar to take advantage of the situation, tour in Bihar and capture the province where feelings were deeply stirred. Unfortunately nothing was done and we lost the great opportunity of organising the Hindu Sabha at a proper foundation in Bihar at least. After staying in Madhupur for two or three days I returned to work in Calcutta.

As the ministers were interviewing Sarat Bose frequently in jail, Herbert, with the help of the Government of India, managed to get Bose transferred to south India. This happened during my absence, and indeed the ministers themselves knew at the very last moment that the order of transfer was going to be executed. Sarat Bose issued instructions that ministers belonging to his party should resign. The Nawab of Dacca and Santosh Basu went to Mercara where Sarat Bose was kept, and came and reported that he had agreed to suspend his judgment for the time being. I myself went to Delhi and interviewed the Viceroy and Maxwell, Home Member, about Sarat Bose's release, or trial, or transfer to Bengal. Sarat Bose had written to the Viceroy challenging him to produce any evidence leading to his guilt. I even persuaded Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India, to act as judge if approached by the Viceroy. But the Viceroy and Maxwell were adamant and nothing could be done. The only assurance given to me was that the Government would see to it that his health did not suffer in any way whatsoever.

Meanwhile, Japan was making startling progress and the British possessions were crumbling to pieces before the Japanese

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invasion. The fall of Singapore, which was deemed impregnable, was a catastrophe of the highest magnitude. Its strategic loss was colossal, but the loss of British prestige accompanying its fall was still more so. The Governor and the bureaucracy were open supporters of the League and although only about forty out of one hundred and twenty-three Muslim members were in the opposition, the Governor felt restive that we were not co-operating with the League. In every matter affecting the welfare of the people, economic and political, we got little co-operation from him and the province. It was a strange experience, the details of which need not be narrated here. My correspondence with the Governor gives the necessary summary of what happened between us and him in 1942 (*see* App. I).

The composition of the ministry on the Hindu side was definitely stronger than that of the Muslims. Apart from the three Caste Hindu ministers, namely, Basu, Banerjee and myself, the Scheduled Caste minister was a man of integrity who laboured hard to do things with care and precision. Among the Muslims, Fazlul Haq was undoubtedly able and pre-eminent. In our company he turned over a new leaf altogether and was genuinely anxious for promoting communal harmony and general welfare. He, however, had great weaknesses as well. It was difficult for him to apply his mind to anything seriously. He could not always be trusted and had to be guarded every moment. There were some people surrounding him who were bad and unworthy and either they made him do things which were not proper, or utilised his name and position in connection with improper transactions. Still, his ability was undoubted, and he could yet rise equal to a great and momentous occasion. Shamsuddin Ahmed was superficial, but clever and intelligent. The Nawab of Dacca was most lovable and indeed thoroughly non-communal. He was however in perpetual want and lacked those traits of character which could make him a leader amongst men. If indeed he were more balanced and straightforward he would have been an undoubted leader of Muslims, at least in Eastern Bengal.

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Hashem Ali was a man of mediocre ability. He worked hard but he could not go beyond certain limits. Abdul Karim was old but entirely honest. His brain often failed him, though I admired his wit and good sense. That was the team which was expected to serve Bengal at a time when war and internal commotion convulsed the entire province. And we were to act in spite of a reactionary, unsympathetic and unresponsive bureaucracy.

In the Legislature we had to meet a small, but organised and determined, opposition coming from the Muslim League. The official Congress party was supposed to be friendly, but inspired by the unholy tactics of one or two of its members it created situations for the ministry, on some occasions, which were difficult and embarrassing. On the whole, its leader Kiran Sankar Roy played his part well but could not control his Chief Whip whose dependability and enthusiasm were often in conflict with each other.

The European group hated our combination because we ignored its presence and utility and yet could run the administration. The solid bloc of thirty Europeans, manufactured by the dishonest Communal Award of Ramsay Macdonald, was intended to hold itself as a balance and to maintain real power in its hands by dividing Hindus and Muslims. Our Coalition Party consisted of more than 150 members without the official Congress Party. Thus our majority was comfortable. One other happy sign was our complete unity within the ministry. Whatever differences there might have been on some issues or other, we presented a solid united front whenever we had to deal with the Governor, or the administration as a whole, or at Cabinet meetings. This had produced remarkable results in every way.

Since the promulgation of the Reforms in India, Bengal was never under the influence of ministers who were truly responsive to public opinion, except for a brief period when Surendranath Banerjea was in office. During the days of C. R. Das the battle cry was 'Down with diarchy', and the Congress thought that the greatest achievement was to render the Constitution unworkable. Non-co-operation was the order of the day and it was not thought

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desirable or necessary that people's representatives should undertake the burden of office. The motive was not blameworthy. The Congress felt that real power had not been transferred to the people and as such the Constitution must be wrecked. If this policy had succeeded cent per cent, it would have been a different matter. What happened was that third-rate men were found available, who could indulge in all fashions of intrigue and corruption prompted by some sections of the bureaucracy, and in spite of occasional breaks the Constitution was ultimately revived. This was helped by the Congress which withdrew from the Legislatures in or about 1930.

Another disastrous consequence was that the British authorities realised, which they never did before, that if Hindus deliberately chose to remain aloof, the King's Government could be carried on with the help of Muslims mainly. Some Hindus were always available to play the role of Umichand. The vicious principle of communalism was introduced in the matter of recruitment of services and this had a most alarming effect on the entire administration. The interest of Hindus suffered and the general efficiency of the governmental machinery deteriorated at a rapid speed.

Our ministry was indeed the first which had the solid backing of the people—practically of the Hindus, and of a considerable section of Muslims who were prepared to follow the leadership of Fazlul Haq. The League, however, was very powerful and Fazlul Haq lacking as he did in the courage of his convictions, failed to organise Muslims under the banner of his own party. The League carried on a virulent.propaganda against him describing him as my puppet and Fazlul Haq could not withstand the pressure of this propaganda. The League was helped by large and influential sections of Muslim and European officers. Herbert himself was the biggest supporter of the League and he pressed us over and again to abadon Haq and to settle with the League.

The political situation in Bengal also was not an easy one. Sir John Anderson dealt with the terrorist movement, but could not subdue the revolutionary urge of the people who could defy all in

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order to secure their political freedom. Bengal has been unfortunate in having amongst her officials, a group of short-sighted and reactionary British civilians who vainly thought that by repression alone they could govern the country. Fanning of the communal flame and bowing to the will of Clive street were the two dominant features of Bengal's administration. The Home Department under Nazimuddin was a real home of tyranny and oppression. In our time Haq was the Home Minister but he was practically helpless. I made him pass orders which we thought were just and rational. But we were out-manoeuvred by the Secretariat or vetoed by the Governor. A regular tug of war went on. Herbert accused me of interfering with the affairs of the Home Department which was not my own. Haq and I both bluntly replied that ours was a joint responsibility and it was perfectly constitutional for us to have acted together. The political situation worsened on account of the war, and arrests and restrictions went on merrily in the name of an emergent situation.

The Denial Policy enunciated by the Government of India was a shocking proof of the nervous breakdown of British administration in India. Our persistent demand for giving wider facilities to Bengalis for military training and equipment was turned down on one pretext or other e.g. lack of time, lack of trainers, lack of materials. But we understood that the real stumbling block was lack of trust. The secret instructions as to what officials, military and civil, were to do in case of invasion and failure of the military, practically indicated that the Government had given Bengal up for lost. I pleaded earnestly that boats, cycles and other means of communication should not be destroyed or removed in the so-called danger area but they should be allowed to work according to a rigorous time-table. In case of defeat and invasion by the enemy they could be destroyed at the last moment by our own staff. This meant no doubt an elaborate staff and expenditure. But in case the enemy never came, the policy of destruction contemplated and indeed actually imposed by the Government, would lead to a complete breakdown of the social and economic life of a large part of the province. My advice was

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rejected and I was quietly told that but for the fact that I was myself a minister, my attiude would have been misinterpreted as indicative of sympathy with the enemy. All that we could do was to better the terms of compensation and to ease the difficulties of the people.

My secretary, Walker, was a man of ability but little imagination. I was amazed to find that the main work of the Finance Department was to treat man, not as a part of humanity but of a machine. Elaborate rules were made for curtailing small items of expenditure but many big items were swallowed easily, specially when they affected the interests of the Whites. Walker's attitude to me at first was cautious. He tried to be dictatorial but very soon he discovered that he could not behave in that fashion. In January 1942, he and I went to Delhi to attend a conference of Finance Ministers and Advisers, of Indian Provinces. The main topic was to decide how contributions made by the Government of India to the provinces for war purposes would be calculated, controlled and adjusted. It was agreed that time was the essence of the emergent situation and routine delay must be avoided. If previous sanction of the Government of India was to be obtained on every matter before expenditure was incurred, work would naturally suffer. Either therefore, the Provincial Government should go on spending, adjustments to be made periodically later on, or, some officer representing the Government of India should remain on the spot and give his opinion immediately without referring the matter to Delhi.

This principle was agreed to unanimously. In fact early in 1942, the province which was mostly affected was Bengal, and various measures e.g. A.R.P., hospital developments, aerodromes etc. were plunging the province into an enormous expenditure. After the plenary session of the conference was over, it was decided that the Finance Department of India would consult the respective Secretaries of the provinces individually and put into shape schemes which would be finally examined by the Finance Member, Sir Jeremy Raisman, and the provincial ministers or advisers concerned. According to this arrangement I was to meet at about 11 a.m. the next day in the room of the Finance Member at the Imperial Secretariat.

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When I arrived there I found that in a chilly winter morning in front of the fireplace sat Raisman, his Secretary and Walker and they all greeted me with a smile stating that the arrangements had been completed and were waiting for my approval. From the start I did not like the presence of Raisman who was to have come there at 11 a.m. along with me. Why, I asked myself, should he come earlier and interfere in the discussions of the Secretaries ? The main point was as to who should be representative of the Central Government, who would give his approval to provincial expenditure for which the Centre was taking either full responsibility or advancing big loans. Raisman with a broad smile told me that in order to simplify matters, the Government of India would be prepared to entrust this very responsible duty to Walker, my Finance Secretary.

I thought at first that the idea was that Walker's services should be placed for the time being at the disposal of the Government of India and I enquired accordingly. I was amazed to learn that the proposal was that Walker would discharge a dual function. He would continue as my Secretary, and also scrutinise and approve the relevant items of provincial expenditure for which the Centre was going to make payments. In other words, it was quite conceivable that a scheme which I as Finance Minister would approve as necessary in Bengal's interest, might be rejected or modified over my head by my own Secretary claiming to act as the representative of Delhi.

Keeping my indignation within myself, I congratulated Raisman that he had found a short cut and was prepared to trust somebody in the Bengal Government to act on behalf of the Government of India. I firmly added that if this somebody was to be taken from Bengal it must be the Finance Minister and not anybody else, and I added without leaving much room for discussion that I was not prepared to have my decision altered by anyone who would continue to be my subordinate in the Bengal Secretariat. Raisman and his companions were not prepared for this direct onslaught. They did not know how to back out of their own folly. He said that it would involve enormous labour, to which I replied that, that was a matter of which I should be the judge.

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It was apparent that while Delhi was prepared to trust a European I.C.S. man belonging to a province, there was no question of trusting an Indian provincial minister. Walker grew red and was most anxious to explain that he was not a party to this proposal. I cut him short and told him that I had expected that, knowing me as he did, he should not have allowed the point to be raised at all. Ultimately it was decided that some officer like the Accountant-General of Bengal who was unconnected with the Bengal Secretariat would be selected to do the work. This small incident left a mark on my mind. This happened hardly a month after my assumption of office and I felt how hopeless the position was.

Another incident happened which made Walker realise that I was to be carefully handled. There was some controversy with regard to an appointment in the C. & W. Department. The Finance Secretary went out of his way to recall the file and made comments thereon which were deliberately in favour of a particular officer who happened to be a European. His suggestion and that of the departmental Secretary, S. K. Ghosh (of whose integrity and independence I then held a high opinion), were like poles assunder. Ghosh did not mince matters, and he openly charged that the real motive why the Finance Secretary poked his nose was racial. This led to a bitterly worded controversy on the file. Words were exchanged between each other which were violent and undignified to all concerned.

Walker came to me one morning with the file and I found he was in a rage. He wanted me to support him in his condemnation of Ghosh. I was not prepared to do anything abruptly, as my habit was to go through the files carefully and then form my own judgment. I kept the file with me. Ghosh came to see me and made a clean breast of everything. He felt that he would not have gone the length he had done if he had not known who was presiding over the Finance Department. He knew that justice would be done and any attempt to lower Indians would not be tolerated. I examined the papers and felt that Walker's attempt to interfere was hasty and uncalled for. At the same time Ghosh's remarks too were highly provocative. The next morning I sent for

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Walker and told him that I could not support him. He felt aghast and he said that never had such a thing happened in the Finance Department. I said my advice to him would be simple but unprecedented. All those pages in the file containing abuses and counter-abuses should be torn off and in future officers should behave rationally. I said, if my suggestion was not acceptable I was going to make my own comments on the file. Walker took a little time and then returned saying that he placed himself entirely at my disposal. Ghosh also did the same, for he knew his point had triumphed and Walker had to eat humble pie. I took out the offending pages from the file and tore them to pieces and threw them into the waste-paper basket.

I pulled on very well with my secretarial staff. They knew that if they worked hard and honestly they had nothing to be afraid of. Regarding interpretation of rules, Walker was amazed at my determination to interpret them liberally, and particularly to the advantage of the poorly paid staff.

There was one pathetic case of a government pensioner who wanted that certain breaks in his service might be condoned so that his small pension of about Rs 30 or 40 per month might be increased by Rs 6 or 8 per month. The rules give the Finance Department ample discretion to grant the application, but elaborate notes were drawn up recommending its rejection, mainly on the ground that there was no precedent favouring the condonation of so many breaks in the service. Rules, I found, were liberally manufactured and interpreted to favour the highly paid servants of the State, particularly foreigners. But the rigour of rules was manifested in all its glory in dealing with the cases of Indians and particularly those who were already ill-paid. I decided to grant this application. My Secretary insisted on my stating reasons for breaking away from the precedent. I found from the application that the poor ex-government servant, though not blessed by fortune, had to carry on his shoulder the burden of a large-sized family. I therefore wrote on the file that in some foreign countries large additions to families were specially rewarded by the state. There was no reason why the Bengal Government should not make that a ground for at least a liberal

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interpretation of pension rules and thereby help the family to some extent out of its wretchedness.

During the Budget discussion of 1942, I had to face a volley of attacks from the Muslim League. My opening speech was a written one, based mainly on departmental notes. My reply to attacks however was extempore. My secretarial staff was full of admiration for the slashing remarks I made in my reply, completely silencing the opposition. The speech was more political than financial and was in reply to the general discussion on the budget of the year. Mine was a 'war budget' and I had to play with crores of rupees, borrowed from other sources, which I did not know how Bengal was ultimately to pay. I was happy however that the financial adjustment between Bengal and India was on a fair and reasonable basis.

Blandy was our Chief Secretary and his death removed an officer of great ability and integrity. He was succeeded by Blair who was Commissioner of Dacca Division. He came at a critical time in the history of Bengal. At heart he was a sound man but somehow his nerves became shattered. He could not keep pace with the political upheavals in the country and regarded them more as anti-British than as characteristic of the natural urge of the people to throw off the foreign yoke. I expected better results from him and was disappointed in what he produced. Porter, Additional Home Secretary, in charge of political prisoners and internal security, was undoubtedly the ablest of the batch. But he had little sympathy for Indian aspirations and as such he was a misfit. He distrusted every Indian and he fondly believed that the country could be governed by repression for all time to come. He was assisted by Ray who was Deputy Inspector-General of C.I.D., another man of distinction and ability but with no sympathy for India. These were the men who controlled law and order and Herbert always leaned on their advice, rejecting ours.

In March, 1942, Stafford Cripps came to India and I was asked to meet him along with Savarkar on behalf of the Hindu Mahasabha. Cripps made a genuine attempt to solve the Indian problem. There was a rumour that Linglithgow did not co-operate with him fully and that Cripps was not permitted to

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make any variation whatsoever by the Home Government. Linglithgow stoutly denied this to me when I asked him about this in July, 1942. The scheme on paper practically gave us nothing with regard to interim arrangements. I knew him when he came to India previously and I had two long discussions with him. I found him very vain and conscious of his own importance. He had just returned after 'conquering' Russia and was fully aware of his great importance. He told me that as a result of some ballot, it appeared that he was almost as popular as Churchill, and he recalled with pleasure the tremendous ovation that greeted him as he entered the House of Commons on his return from Russia. He added, 'Here is one man who counts in England today'. I asked whether he referred to Churchill. Forcibly he said 'No' and then pointed his finger to himself. He then said that India would either make him or mar him. If he succeeded in settling with India, there would be none to compete with him in the whole British Empire. Regarding the Interim Scheme, he said, if necessary, he would himself come out as Viceroy for the first period and see to it that the spirit of the settlement was maintained intact.

I disliked intensely his scheme for possible partition of India giving right to the provinces to secede from the Indian Union. I said, 'You are breaking with your own hand the one great achievement of the British in India—the political unity of India as a whole'. He realised the weakness of his scheme but said this was the least H.M.G. could do to placate the Muslim League. He told me—and in fact he developed this in one of his press interviews—that Bengal could never go out of the Indian Union since one essential condition for the formation of a federation with Muslim provinces was that such provinces must be contiguous to each other. Jinnah challenged this and even suggested that he would demand a corridor to link up Bengal with Western Pakistan.

It was clear to me that all that Cripps wanted was to bag the Congress. If the Congress were prepared to come, H.M.G. would get along with the scheme ignoring the rest. He paid some attention to the Muslim League no doubt. But he was not

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prepared to go a step forward without the Congress. He had called the Mahasabha, but I could feel that our disagreement or agreement was of little value to him. Regarding the Scheduled Castes he was completely indifferent. From this point of view his failure was a matter of deep tragedy, for he was determined not to play with minorities or rake up small parties in order to create artificial barriers. He could not give much assurance about defence and the Viceroy's veto. The Mahasabha was the first to have rejected his scheme.

There was much in it that we liked but we could be no party to any scheme that contemplated India's vivisection. And Cripps said that he had come with his scheme, which one had either to accept or reject in toto. In fact, on this point I told him bluntly that India was not such an easy problem that he could tell her either to take it or leave it. There was one Stalin in Russia and to settle with him was to settle with Russia. But India boasted of scores of Stalins, big or small, and one must proceed cautiously in a true spirit of negotiation, and not dictation, if one wished to succeed in one's mission. After our resolution was passed, the Congress announced its rejection and the Muslim League also followed. I met Vallabbhai Patel during this time at Aney's house. Patel assured me that his group would never allow the Congress to agree to Pakistan.

Thus ended the Cripps' Mission. Looking at it from this distance of time, it seems we should have accepted the offer in 1942 without committing ourselves on the question of India's division. At that time Japan was proceeding towards India with a terrific speed. Everything was crumbling down and British prestige was at its lowest level. At that time H.M.G. wanted to settle in its own interest. Without a willing India on her side England could not win the Asiatic war—that was the burden of the song. We thought, on our part, that the bank was crashing after all.

Whatever Cripps brought with him related to the future, and the future was dark for Britain herself. We practically got nothing for the time being and we were expected to carry on the war against Japan under the protecting wings of the British

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administration in India. I now feel we should have grasped the power in 1942 however unsatisfactory in some respects the offer might have been. We could have then hastened the dawn of fuller freedom. We would have been on the saddle and many matters would have been shaped by us according to the nation's need. Who knows, with the constitutional machinery working in full order, we might have prevented the catastrophic famine. We could do all, however, only if the Congress as the largest and most well-organised political party in India had agreed to come to terms with H.M.G.—not otherwise.

As I have previously indicated, Bengal had been the scene of a bitter communal warfare resulting in riots and distrubances which were encouraged, directly and indirectly, by reason of the reactionary policy of the communal ministry which was in power before we came into office. Haq and myself were in those days the two main protagonists championing the cause of Muslims and Hindus respectively. By a strange turn of events we found ourselves working together as colleagues from December 1941. Although many of the Muslim members of our Coalition Party were previously hostile to me personally, in the extreme, on account of my pro-Hindu bias, I succeeded in inspiring in their minds, a feeling of trust and confidence towards me after I came into office. My honest belief was that if leaders of both communities played the game, there could be no communalism in the province at all. Leaders must be in a position to assure their communities that their interests are being well looked after, and once this public confidence is established, mischief-makers who want to play with fire wantonly, quickly fade away and become impotent.

The ugly riots that broke out in Dacca in 1941 had died out but had left their scars in many forms. Prosecutions in large numbers were still pending and heavy collective fines had yet to be realised. Haq, the Nawab of Dacca and myself went to Dacca, met different sections of the people, addressed meetings in the town and the rural areas, and our efforts were eminently successful. The most successful meeting was held in the rural area of Narayanganj where a year ago Muslims perpetrated

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terrible acts of oppression on the Hindus. The speech of the Nawab of Dacca was outspoken in the extreme. He warned all that a new government had come into power which was not going to tolerate any acts of injustice and would deal evenly with the bad elements of society irrespective of consequences.

On return to Calcutta and with the full concurrence of the Cabinet, we granted amnesty to the convicted persons and withdrew practically all the pending prosecutions. In short, the whole Dacca atmosphere changed like magic. The rest of the province also was extremely peaceful. Hindus had the fullest confidence in the ministry, and in fact were glad that for the first time since 1937, and even earlier, they were having a government where their view-point was fully represented. It was different with the Muslims however. The League carried on a persistent propaganda through press and platform, and the ministry was dubbed as deliberately intending to harm Muslim interests. They had no facts and figures to support their thesis, and their main object of attack was Haq who was portrayed as the greatest betrayer of Islam.

In the Assembly, the Muslim opposition had a number of able speakers who could twist things and put their case forcibly and maliciously. One of their big hurdles related to the appointment of A.R.P. staff. In view of the impending emergency, the communal ratio could not be observed fully with regard to these appointments. This was done with the approval of the Cabinet. This was made the target of the main attack and Fazlul Haq was very uncomfortable. Some Muslim officers who were extremely pro-League in their attitude had to be transferred from the scene of their activities. They inspired propaganda from within. The Governor and the Secretariat were anxious to distinguish between attacks on the ministry and on government as such. They were not prepared even during wartime to help us in checking outrageously communal outbursts that were slowly creating a new menace in Bengal.

With the rapid progress of the war, the attitude of the Home Department was stiffening against Hindu nationalists and repression had started in a calculated fashion. Large schemes of

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evacuation of rural areas for military purposes were put in operation. In some cases they were given effect to in a spirit of recklessness. Very short notice was given to the villagers to evacuate, and after disturbing the lives of thousands of people and rendering them homeless and helpless, some of the schemes were abandoned and searches were made for different sites. The Denial Policy, which included destruction of means of communication and removal of rice and paddy from the dangerous zone, produced the most distressing consequences on the economic life of Bengal. True, compensations were paid, but however generous the scale might have been, such payments could hardly compensate for the loss of recurring income of those persons who were deprived of the use of their boats etc. The plan for removal of rice and paddy was executed by Herbert personally, and orders were communicated by him to Kripalani, Joint Secretary, Commerce and Labour Department. The firm of Ispahanis acting through a *benamdar* was selected for handling so-called surplus rice and paddy.

The whole transaction was made behind the backs of the ministers. There was no contract approved previously. I was then in Delhi and on my return we took up the matter. We made some alterations, changing the scheme for giving monopoly to Ispahanis, put the details in the shape of an agreement, but even then sufficient mischief had been done. In my opinion this was the beginning of the deterioration of the food situation in Bengal. Once it was known that Government agents were purchasing rice and paddy in the market, prices began to fluctuate and conditions became extremely disturbed. Herbert told me that he had acted under the express orders of the Government of India, for this was a war measure intended to deprive the enemy of any possibility of having foodgrains in case it ran into Bengal. The Department of Commerce and Labour which was in charge of Civil Supply in those days was badly administered. The Nawab of Dacca was an undependable minister and his Joint Secretary, Kripalani, though able, was not trustworthy.

Neither of them had the will or capacity to grasp the problem of food supply which might take a particularly aggravated form

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during the period of war. Indeed the whole policy of price control first enunciated by the Government of India was not directed towards alleviation of possible sufferings of the people at large. The Government wanted all sorts of supplies for war purposes and its main concern was how to find an adequate supply with minimum cost. The policy of price control of essential commodities therefore did never succeed in India. Control of prices without necessary supplies could never work; this indeed leads to a black-market.

I was asked to handle the question of supplying salt to Bengal which was a deficit province in this respect. I did make satisfactory arrangements with the Government of India which counted on the support of Sind which was the main source of supply. But I found that unless scrupulous steps were taken, any scheme for bringing any large quantities of essential things through a limited number of agents led to various kinds of corruption and bribery. Herbert himself was dissatisfied with the management of the Commerce and Labour Department so far as Civil Supply was concerned. At one stage he definitely asked me to take up this work along with Finance. But the Nawab of Dacca revolted and thought it was a calculated insult to him. Meanwhile, Herbert found that if I were in charge of the Department, I would have my own way which might not be to his liking and therefore he also did not persist. The Department however was at first entrusted to Abdul Karim who kept it along with his other portfolios. This arrangement also did not work satisfactorily. In fact the Department was transferred to the Nawab on account of Abdul Karim's illness.

When the first Director of Civil Supplies was appointed, the matter came before the Cabinet. We urged that an Indian officer of ability and experience should be selected for the purpose. Herbert had his eye on L.G. Pinnel, a man of ability but without experience or wide sympathy. His appointment could not be carried through the Cabinet, and Herbert managed to get him selected by compelling the Nawab of Dacca, Minister-in-Charge, to agree to his appointment. This was a disgraceful performance on the part of both Herbert and the Nawab of Dacca.

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Constitutionally we could not do anything, as Government meant the Governor acting with the minister concerned, and the appointment was deemed to have been validly made. Since the time of Pinnel's appointment the control practically passed to his hands completely. At a Cabinet meeting he brought forward his scheme which was a shocking document. I am sorry I had not kept a copy of this with me but this clearly showed how the bureaucracy utterly failed to realise the importance and gravity of the food problem in Bengal.

At that time prices were fluctuating and rice and paddy were becoming scarce. Purchases by the Government were going on, in some cases even at rates higher than what were fixed by the Government itself. Big employers of labour were also doing the same. The market was thus in a most erratic condition. Pinnel's theory was that it was impossible to supply food grains to all classes of people at a fair price. All that the Government could do was to keep up some kind of show for Calcutta and the industrial areas, so that the poorer people might get something through Government-controlled shops at low rates. His amazing proposition was that the whole scheme should be worked out in conjunction with the police, as failure to supply foodgrains would ultimately become a problem of law and order. These people had not the sense to understand that disorder could come only if there was a breakdown of supply and that was an issue which did not concern the Civil Supply Department, which should direct its whole energy to procure food and not bother about preservation of law and order. We tore the scheme to pieces at a Cabinet meeting and there were ugly scenes of conflict with the Governor. The Governor was not is a mood to listen to advice, and I soon realised that the time was coming when I would have to quit office.

Meanwhile the situation in the political sphere was developing rapidly. It was clear that the Congress was going to throw out an ultimatum, and it was equally clear that the Government was determined to take it up in a right royal fashion. The Congress was finding itself in a most unenviable position. It withdrew from office but it was not prepared to launch a campaign. The

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Government also was adamant; it was not willing to part with power and its last word was the Cripps Scheme. In July the situation could be very well anticipated. I went to Delhi at this time and wrote a long letter to the Governor (*see* App. II). I need not repeat the points which I mentioned there, but I gave indication of my entire dissatisfaction in the manner Herbert was carrying on, and predicted that disaster was bound to come if he did not change. Previously, I wrote another important letter on the eve of Herbert's departure for Delhi where he was going to hold a conference with the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief regarding the war situation. There I pressed him hard to allow us to raise a Bengal Army specially for Home Defence.

I met the Viceroy in Delhi towards the end of July, 1942. I could gather that he knew Herbert's limitations very well but of course he could not go beyond the Constitution, no matter whether the province was wrecked or not. I discovered that he was fully prepared to meet the political situation with as much sternness as the British bayonets would allow him to. On 8th August, 1942, the Congress was meeting in Bombay to give its ultimatum its final shape. After the departure of Cripps, at a meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Allahabad in or about April, 1942, a resolution of Jagatnarayan Lal disapproving Pakistan and supporting a united India at any cost was passed by an overwhelming majority. Rajagopalachari, the main figure in the opposition had hardly two dozen supporters with him and they almost vanished into thin air.

At the Bombay meeting, various interpretations were put on this resolution and it was urged that this could not override an official resolution of the Working Committee which, though supporting the idea of a united India, could not contemplate that any unit should be compelled by force to live within such an India. This important issue however was put temporarily in the background on account of the momentous nature of the challenge which the Congress threw out to the Government during the war period.

On my way back to Calcutta I halted at Allahabad for a few hours and had a long discussion with Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. I

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gave him copies of my letters to the Governor which indicated how I was struggling against heavy odds while carrying on my duties as minister. When I returned to Calcutta the stage was practically fully set. Gandhiji was authorised to give the final direction regarding the starting of the movement, but it was well known that the Viceroy would not allow any time to pass nor would he agree to meet Gandhiji. He arrested the whole lot in Bombay as soon as the resolution was accepted by the A.I.C.C.

Fazlul Haq told me that important instructions of a secret nature had arrived from the Government of India and he gave me the gist of the same. He added that he had asked the Governor to summon a cabinet meeting and place the whole matter before the ministers, but the Governor had declined to do so. He said—in fact he wrote on this line to the Chief Minister in answer to his letter of request—that later on the Cabinet would meet and he expected that any minster who did not agree with the policy outlined by the Government of India could forthwith resign and make the task of administration easier for the Governor. In veiw of the struggle that was going on between him and me, he obviously referred to myself. We met to consider the situation which we thought to be wholly unprecedented. Responsible ministers were to be treated with suspicion and refused access to important documents which were being secretly discussed with I.C.S.officers for carrying them into effect in due course—this was a real mockery of provincial autonomy. How we should record our protest we however had no chance to consider, because the arrests were made on the night of 8th August and the Governor himself summoned the Cabinet in the morning on the very next day.

I raised the question as to why we were not consulted before, to which there was no reply. I demanded that the letter of the Government of India should be placed before the meeting and I was amazed to find that the letter was not then available. All the ministers insisted that without seeing the document the meeting could not proceed. Thus the Cabinet had to stand adjourned till the evening, and it was decided that meanwhile the letter would be made available to such ministers who wished to have a look at

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it. As we were about to leave Government House, Porter came with the file and handed it over to the Chief Minister, who in turn made it over to me. I brought the file with me to my house and read it very carefully. It was clear, that long before the Congress could give any provocation, the Government was to start its campaign of repression, and all the details for this purpose were elaborately outlined in the letter. It was tersely put that 'prevention was better than cure' and this time the Government was determined to anticipate a possible revolt and sternly deal with the situation from the beginning.

The ministers were to have met at the house of the Nawab of Dacca before going to Government House. I felt very uneasy and uncomfortable about the whole thing. It was useless to function as a minister when we would become mere tools at the hands of the bureaucracy which was determined to teach lessons to the people which they would not easily forget. There was a function at the University the same evening, when a portrait of Rabindranath Tagore was being presented to China, and I had to take part in those proceedings.

The meeting at the Nawab's house broke up without a final decision. It was clear that none of the ministers was willing to resign. Santosh Bose bluntly remarked that if he and the others could continue as ministers even after the arrest of their leader Sarat Bose, there was no question of their resigning at that stage on some other issues. The all-India leaders in Bombay had already been arrested and the car of repression had made a very good start. I did not disclose my mind to anybody then and all of my colleagues begged me not to resign and precipitate matters.

I came to Government House directly from the University and found my colleagues already waiting for me there. None knew what I was going to do, though the Governor, who looked extremely self-satisfied, had an idea that I had been given too big and bitter a pill to swallow and I would most likely quit office. His attitude was stiff and straight. He reminded us that the policy was that of the Government of India, and that was unchangeable. If any minister disagreed with it he would be glad if he intimated accordingly then and there and offered his

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resignation. Those who would continue in office were expected to abide by the policy loyally and maintain law and order at any cost at a time when the country was threatened with a dangerous war. I was the first to whom the question was put; my reply was that I disagreed with the policy but I was not going to resign on that day. I announced that I would send a communication to the Viceroy and if his reply was not satisfactory, then I would resign my ministership. My other colleagues however did not do or say what I did. Some details were discussed regarding giving effect to the policy of repression and I was wholly indifferent to what transpired.

The reason why I did not resign then and there was a puzzle to Herbert also. He quickly dismissed the Cabinet and took me to a side room. We sat there and talked very frankly for more than an hour. I told him that I did not resign immediately for two reasons. I would like first to put the all-India issue before the Viceroy and request him to carry my message to H.M.G. I knew this would not lead to anything, but this was the constitutional way of a minister's views being made known to the highest British authorities in respect of vital matters affecting the peace and welfare of India. Secondly, since my colleagues were not going to follow me, I was anxious to have an assurance from Herbert that he would not take advantage of my resignation, dissolve the ministry and install the League into power again.

I took Herbert by the horns, and asked him not to play tricks with the affairs of the province but allow the existing majority party in the legislature to run the administration, without any attempt to put the League into office either by threat or by intrigue. I.warned him that if he did so, he would have to face an opposition from the entire province the like of which he could not even imagine. He appreciated my standpoint also. At any rate he said so, and assured me he would not do anything of the kind I feared. He was anxious that my letter to the Viceroy should be quickly sent, so that it may not take a long time before my disassociation with the ministry was completed. On 12th August I sent my letter to Lord Linglithgow (*see* App. III) through Herbert himself. Herbert told me that its tone was provocative

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and challenging, but he could well feel that I was writing out of my convictions.

The whole country was in a state of rebellion. Disturbances of extraordinary nature took place, and province after province simply shook with the after-effects of a catastrophic upheaval. Destruction of rails, roads and other means of communications, compelling the police and protectors of law to surrender to the will of the people; *hartals* and demonstrations plunged the whole country into a state of convulsion. The leaders were arrested before the movement had started; no specific orders had been passed by them. Yet in some places the challenging acts of the people seemed to have been controlled by well directed hands. The outburst was spontaneous, and naturally in many places different elements must have combined together to make it a success. It appeared that the administration was going to be paralysed, what with strikes, lock-outs and other forms of resistance.

Bengal was ominously quiet. Our instruction was that whatever happened, the police must not provoke the people in any way and the first grasp of enthusiasm must be allowed to pass off without let or hindrance. Indeed so peaceful was the atmosphere of Bengal that Amery eulogised the province from the House of Commons. Even Herbert thought that this was a most stupid performance of Amery. He said that the man was living six thousand miles away; he did not know our difficulties and was adding to our troubles by these sort of unnecessary self-congratulatory utterances. Herbert was not far from wrong. By a strange coincidence within a few hours of Amery's speech, Calcutta broke into flames. The first information that reached me in the Secretariat was that wanton assaults were made on a students' demonstration at Wellington Square. This led to small attacks and counter-attacks on the streets which in their turn led to attacks on tram cars which were set on fire and so on.

Our definite instruction was that the Police was not to use force and I was at a loss to understand why that was violated. I rang up Carter, the Governor's Secretary, and he told me in an irritated voice that the patience of the police was overstepped by

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the action of the students who had burnt an ambulance car, and the police was justified in taking action. I made a thorough enquiry but could not discover any trace of the ambulance car which was alleged to have been burnt. In fact when I questioned the Commissioner-of-Police, Fairweather, about this, his reply was extremely evasive and unsatisfactory. I have no doubt that the whole story was a myth and was invented to serve as an excuse for setting the ball of repression in motion. Later on, we enquired why the Chief Minister was not informed before force was employed, to which there was no satisfactory answer.

The Commissioner-of-Police and the other stalwarts of law and order met the Governor almost daily at Government House and took instructions from him, ignoring the Chief Minister who was also Home Minister, not to say anything about other ministers. Thus Bengal was set on fire and Calcutta witnessed scenes of unbelievable acts of repression and shooting. Many innocent lives were taken and the whole situation went out of control. We were entirely helpless in the matter.

When troubles broke out outside Calcutta, information was slow to come. The administration practically was controlled by the bureaucracy who allowed their whims to dominate over their better sentiments of fair and impartial administration. The Chief Secretary, Blair, lost his head. The slogan of 'Quit India' was regarded by the I.C.S. people as a direct challenge to 'White' administration in India and they felt no compunction in shooting down the 'Blacks'. Troubles were really serious in Midnapore where the representatives of the people had practically paralysed the entire administration. They held trials of officers, of undependable citizens, and even packed them off to unknown places on land and water as marks of punishment. Heavy collective fines were imposed by the Govt. in all parts of Bengal and they were fixed on Hindus alone. That was an all-India policy.

The All-India Hindu Mahasabha Working Committee met in Delhi and reviewed the political situation. It was emphatic in its

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condemnation of the repressive policy of the Government and stated categorically that but for the bungling of the Government and its hasty action, things would never have gone so badly. On my way to Delhi I could see from the appearance of the railway stations and their adjoining localities how terrific the uprising had been. In fact if it had continued for some time more the entire administration would have been paralysed. The chief point of attack was the breaking of communications, and during the period of war this obviously can have a most disastrous effect on the administration. Still we had no doubt that the situation had become acute on account of the perverseness of the Government and its refusal to transfer power to the people of India.

We declared that India could not be held by the sword nor could the war be won with a sullen and oppressed India. We therefore demanded that the leaders should be released, talks should be re-opened, and an Indo-British settlement should be quickly made leading to India's progress and freedom. At that time some of us thought that the Mahasabha should openly join the movement. Savarkar was not agreeable to this first, on the ground that it was not a Congress movement as the leaders were clapped behind prison bars before giving any direction.

It was a sort of uprising, similar to what had happened in 1857, and a revolt in which Hindus participated much more than others. It was open to any Hindu to help in any way the cause of his country's liberty and for that purpose the Mahasabha need not openly join the movement as such. Further the Muslim League had branded the Congress resolution, and whatever happened afterwards, as a series of actions directed against the Muslims. It was felt, with the Congress out of the picture, the League should not be allowed to remain as the single party functioning constitutionally for that would hurt the Hindus most grievously. Savarkar declared that in spite of all this, he would have been prepared to take the plunge provided the Congress leaders had made a satisfactory response to his appeal, issued from Poona just before August, 1942, to the effect that the Congress should pledge itself heart and soul to the doctrine of an

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undivided India and not compromise on this issue under any circumstances whatsoever at a later period. He had an uncanny feeling even then that Gandhiji would very soon attempt to compromise with Jinnah on the issue of Pakistan, and if the Mahasabha identified itself with the Congress, it might mean complete disaster to the Hindu cause.

The Mahasabha appointed a Committee, of which I was Chairman, to explore how we could present a united front in order to compel the H.M.G. to take steps for ending the political deadlock. Our Committee laboured hard. We toured in different places and met people belonging to various important parties. N. C. Chatterjee, Mehr Chand Khanna and Maheswar Dayal Seth were of great assistance to me in this behalf. In fact the Committee practically captured the public imagination by reason of its bold and clear advocacy of India's cause. The Sikhs, led by Master Tara Singh, were with us. Fazlul Haq, Premier of Bengal, was influenced to side with us, and Allabux, Premier of Sind, and a redoubtable champion of Indian nationalism and liberty was hundred per cent with us.

I had a long discussion with Sikandar Hyat Khan, then Premier of Punjab, but he put me on my guard. He said that the key to the settlement lay on the lap of the Viceroy. It was no use our trying to come to an agreement with Muslims other than the League for the Viceroy would not even care to look at it. He had made up his mind that he was going to recognise Jinnah as the only leader of the Muslims. If the Viceroy was prepared to accept a reasonable settlement made between us and Sikandar Hyat Khan and others, then the matter could be quickly disposed of.

I met the Viceroy at that time, specially to obtain his permission to interview Gandhi at Poona. This permission was refused and I was also told that the League being the dominant Muslim Party, there could be no settlement without it. I found the Viceroy very bitter. He said that the Hindus were doomed as Jinnah was made great not by the Government but by the Congress, and the greatest catastrophe was the rejection of the federation scheme which was his pet child. However much I disagreed with the Viceroy on other matters, there as a good deal

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of truth in what he said. Thus our efforts failed. But we demonstrated that in spite of tremendous odds, an agreement between Hindus and Muslims, and also other communities and interests, could be reached only if the British Government took a rational view of things and was prepared to accept the validity of such a settlement.

I met Jinnah also in Delhi and had a three hours talk with him. We spoke very frankly to each other. He was as adamant on his Pakistan as I was against it and we could not disover a point of contact. I told him that before Cripps came out to India, all that Jinnah wanted was that his Pakistan should not be tabooed but considered dispassionately at the time of constitution-making. I asked why on that basis, we should not agree to demand from the Viceroy the immediate establishment of an interim national government followed by the release of Congress leaders. His reply was immediate. He said that the situation had changed since Cripps gave him something like Pakistan, though not exactly what he wanted. His basis for settlement would now therefore be the acceptance of the principle of Pakistan here and now and then only he could talk of an interim settlement. I exposed to him the utter fallacy of his Pakistan logic but it made no impression on him. In any case there was no acrimony between him and me and we agreed that we should not issue statements accusing each other, but would consider ourselves happy that we had tried to explore each other's point of view, respecting each other's sentiments. When I came back to my work in Bengal I found the Assembly in a state of great excitement. Herbert was not happy regarding the way in which the ministers were behaving. He complained that they were not sufficiently vocal in their condemnation of lawlessness and he wanted a suitable resolution to be passed on the floor of the Assembly.

At the meeting of the Assembly, the European party inspired by the Governor, tabled a resolution on the subject which obviously no ministry could accept. An official amendment was tabled by Badrudoza who was the General Secretary of our Coalition Party. In that resolution we emphasised that while it

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was the duty of the Government to maintain law and order, no administration could be carried on by mere force and without the willing consent of the people. The amendment demanded the recognition of India's right of independence, and an immediate political settlement leading towards that goal.

The Muslim League vehemently opposed the moving of the amendment which was technically out of its normal time. The Speaker's office was then vacant as Azizul Haque had then gone to England as High Commissioner for India. Jalaluddin Hashemy, Deputy Speaker, was in the chair. Points of order were raised and the combined anxiety of the Europeans and the Muslim League was that Badrudoza's amendment must not be put to the vote. That amendment, backed by a large number of Hindus and Muslims, would have demonstrated how the ministry had the backing of both communities and was upholding the cause of India's self-respect.

The most ugly scenes were witnessed. Shouts and counter-shouts, attacks and counter-attacks went to the extreme possible length. Badrudoza was physically prevented from proceeding with his speech or even reading his amendment. He was howled down, and so were treated the leaders of the opposition. The Deputy Speaker wanted, in these circumstances, to close the debate and put the amendment to the vote. He gave an opportunity to the Muslim League to move any amendment it liked then and there. But its sole object was to adopt delaying tactics. Ultimately when Badrudoza's amendment was about to be put to the vote, the Deputy Speaker was rushed at and was about to be physically assaulted by some members of the opposition. He was himself under a physical disability and was accustomed to walk with the help of his crutches which were sought to be seized. Ultimately the Assembly had to be adjourned *sine die*.

It was clear to us that this demonstration was made possible only because of the Governor's instigation. The European party had by now decided to side with the opposition. Till now it was acting as an independent party and hardly, if ever, voted against the ministry. Now it had decided to join hands with the

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opposition, which thus gained considerable numerical strength. There were members in the Coalition Party who were undependable and who thought this to be a great opportunity of theirs. The opposition also bribed them directly and indirectly. Again, Fazlul Haq failed to keep his party together. He himself was not trusted by his own men, and the man who greatly influenced him was his nephew who was also acting as his private secretary.

Murshed was an able officer and had the capacity of doing things remarkably well. But he was by nature a man of intrigue, and his sympathy was with the Muslim League. He made attempts to get Fazlul Haq to make overtures to the League but his attempts were foiled by me as I came to know of them in due time. Muslim members of Haq's party were given reckless promises but they were not always fulfilled. There were factions within the party, and it required a strong and firm hand to do equal justice to all so as to keep the party together.

The most important factor was Haq's inability to develop his party outside the legislature so that it might have a real hold on the Muslim masses which were being influenced more and more by the League. Haq's own indecision, and lack of faith in the future of a progressive and nationalist Muslim party were real obstacles. Added to these was the presence of the Krishak Praja Party, under Shamsuddin Ahmed's leadership, which was determined to keep its party label separate and not merge with any communal organisation as such. Lack of funds was the excuse offered every time when we warned Haq and his followers of the dangerous consequences of this policy of drift. But money could always come if a programme was properly drawn up. In fact, a lac of rupees was provided in the budget for taking steps to achieve communal harmony. I was anxious that a real scheme towards this end should be drawn up. But no such scheme was forthcoming and there were demands that I should hand over this money to the party and allow it to squander it. This I refused to do and practically the entire fund remained untouched.

I received the Viceroy's reply towards the end of September. It was of course anticipated. He could not do anything at that stage and his first duty was to maintain law and order in the country. I

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made up my mind to tender a resignation and the question was when I would do so. Apart from the all-India issues, I fully realised that in the provincial sphere I could hardly do any work leading to the good of the province, in view of the hostile and unsympathetic attitude of the Governor and the coterie of officials who practically ruled over the province. The political situation also rendered our position extremely difficult. Whatever we recommended was practically turned down.

On 16th October 1942, a severe cyclone and tidal wave swept over Midnapore, taking a heavy toll of lives numbering perhaps more than 30,000. Calcutta felt the shock but we had no idea that its intensity was so terrific in Midnapore. From Midnapore we had been receiving reports of official oppression of an unprecedented character. In fact my attempt to check official lawlessness was causing delay in tendering my resignation of office. Burning of houses, looting of properties, wanton assaults, were some of the allegations that came to us from the people of Midnapore. The movement of 1942 also manifested itself in an unprecedented manner in Midnapore and the officials bitterly complained that they were unable to trace the real culprits. As soon as villages were about to be raided by the police or the military, their approach would be announced by young persons sitting on tops of trees blowing conch-shells. The result was, when the police arrived, practically the whole area was deserted by the menfolk.

The District Magistrate of Midnapore, N. M. Khan, coming from Punjab, was an officer of ability but wholly erratic and reckless. In addition to this he was communal and extremely reactionary in outlook. Perhaps a more humane magistrate could have dealt with the situation at the first stage more satisfactorily. When I asked the Governor whether he knew of any secret instructions issued to the police and military regarding the burning of houses by the police as a measure of retaliation, I was told that none in the headquarters knew of such instructions. The people of Midnapore had been very hard hit by reason of the Denial Policy. About 10,000 bicycles and thousands of boats were seized and destroyed. Although small compensations were paid, this loss was a source of constant irritation and dissatisfaction.

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On 15th October, we had a conference at the Writer's Buildings attended by the Chief Secretary, Inspector-General of Police, D.I.G. and C.I.D. We discussed the situation at Midnapore. It was definitely understood that immediate information would be sent to the officers concerned, telling them it was against the policy of the Government to take any retaliatory steps such as burning and looting, and if such steps had been taken in the past they must not be followed again.

On the 16th, I left with our family for Darjeeling where I wanted to stay for a week or two. For nearly three days I had no information about the terrible affairs of Midnapore due to the cyclone and the tidal wave. Nothing had been published in the newspapers, and I believe very scanty information was sent to the Governor also. I was almost daily in touch with the Governor who was then staying at Darjeeling and it was not until five days later that I came to know of the disaster. Reports also came to me from Calcutta informing me that people from Midnapore had come to see me and the situation was extremely desperate. Later on I was told that the Home Department stopped all publicity regarding the cyclone and the tidal wave, lest such information should reach the enemy. This was a preposterous argument, for within twenty-four hours of the incident the enemy radio, I was told later, was broadcasting reports of the terrible damage and the Government's apathy.

I hurried back to Calcutta and had then some idea of the details from the Secretariat. Some publicity was then given but that was very meagre. I decided to leave for Midnapore at once, though the departmental heads were not very keen that I should do so. I was accompanied by the Nawab of Dacca and Pramatha who was the Revenue Minister. B. R. Sen also accompanied us. We saw the nature of the devastation with our own eyes. It was something horrible. The first question was how to grant relief as quickly as possible. The Magistrate was full of words but people did not trust him at all. I was satisfied [told] that burning and looting of houses had gone on previously by official agencies, and even after the cyclone, in some parts of Midnapore such retaliatory measures were not abandoned. I had first-hand evidence of

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this. Midnapore was unlucky in having as its Magistrate a man of the type of Khan, and a man of the type of Sen as the S.D.O. of Contai, and another equally undependable and unsympathetic officer as S.D.O. of Tamluk.

I met the political prisoners in Midnapore jail, and I was most anxious that they should agree to devote their whole time to relief activities so that I could get them released on that basis at once. The magistrate was present during my interview and he hardly liked the way in which I talked with the prisoners. In fact I heard later on, that he had the audacity to send a confidential report to the Home Department dealing with my activities and discussions in Contai, Midnapore and Tamluk. Haldar, Commissioner of the Division, and Taylor, D.I.G. were also there. It was a situation that called for an all-out action, forgetting party squabbles and all distinctions between offical and non-official activities. I found to my regret that the local officers could never rise equal to the occasion. In fact Khan, I found later, had sent a confidential report to the Secretariat stating that the best way to teach the people of Midnapore an unforgettable lesson was to postpone relief by a few weeks—this documentary evidence of the heartlessness of this officer, who was not punished, must be available on the files of the Secretariat.

On return to Calcutta, we held a prolonged conference where all the departmental heads concerned were present. Khan also was brought in. I was prepared to take full responsibility for any consequences that might ensue on the release of the political prisoners. But the Home Department was adamant. It suggested humiliating and unconditional terms of surrender which were utterly meaningless. What I wanted was a real grand gesture which might obliterate feelings of hostilities towards the Government, and that all might wholeheartedly work to save and serve humanity. The Chief Minister was present at some period of the conference. But he was prepared to abide by whatever I did. Ultimately we were overruled by the Governor who was even then at Darjeeling and had not issued even a message of sympathy at this terrible catastrophe. I received a telephone message from Darjeeling saying that the Governor was not

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prepared to agree to the scheme that we propounded for organising both mental and physical relief to the people of Midnapore.

I went back to Darjeeling in about the middle of November and on 16th November I sent in my resignation (*see* App. IV). This letter was proscribed by Fazlul Haq himself on the advice of the Secretariat. The letter however will give a gist of the events leading to my resignation.

I should not fail to record that I had not previously intimated to my colleagues that I was going to resign. None of them was willing to follow me. Although some of them did complain later on that mine was a surprise action, they knew perfectly well that my letter to the Viceroy dated 12th August made my resignation inevitable sooner or later. I, however, gave my colleagues and also the Coalition Party my fullest assurance of loyal support so as to keep the ministry in office, in spite of a determined onslaught from the League and the Europeans. I however felt that time was not far distant when the ministry would go out of office. Although I was consulted on all matters, it was difficult to influence big decisions which were often the result of a bitter conflict between the ministry on the one hand and the Governor on the other. Further, the solidarity of the party and the ministry dwindled more and more with my resignation.

The situation in the country was gradually becoming desperate. The war had brought fresh problems which affected the daily lives of millions of people. Early in 1942 and onwards, the prestige of the British Government fell to pieces with the fall of Malaya, Singapore and Burma. The story of the disaster in Burma reached Bengal in all its hideousness, and people felt that what had happened to Rangoon yesterday was bound to come to Bengal tomorrow. There was panic all round and rumours added to this panic. People fled from Calcutta hither and thither, some going to the villages, others out of Bengal altogether. The food problem also was getting to be serious. Pinnel was all in all, and the Nawab of Dacca was a mere tool in his hands. The work of the Education Department suffered terribly. Education seemed to be the first and foremost victim of war, and school buildings

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and hostels were requisitioned mercilessly without making any provision for their continuance in other ways. In this respect, the attitude of H.M.G. towards the school-going population in England was entirely different. In fact the Education Minister in England announced in the House of Commons that next to the Military Budget, expenses on education had increased tremendously during the war, and the Government saw to it that no educational institution suffered on account of emergency.

My resignation was accepted by the Governor on 20th November in Calcutta. Fazlul Haq tried to have the matter reconsidered, but neither the Governor nor I myself was agreeable to any such course of action. My last interview with Herbert was on the evening of 19th November. He was extremely anxious that my correspondence with him should not see the light of the day and he wanted an assurance from me to that effect. I told him that I could give him no such assurance unless he was prepared to help me in one respect. I pointed out that in his own country even the British Prime Minister to whom an Indian Viceroy or Governor owes his appointment could be removed out of office by virtue of the will of the people represented through Parliament. There must therefore be some machinery available in this country, whereby we could get rid of an incompetent Governor like himself who was thoroughly unfit to shoulder the great responsibility of his office during a grave emergency. He was greatly annoyed at this remark and our interview came to an abrupt end.

My letters were published shortly afterwards and they were proscribed by the Government. I issued a statement (*see* App. V) dealing with the facts that led to my resignation and that was published with some modifications. There was a great feeling in the country that the other Hindu ministers at least should have resigned. But I explained the peculiar situation in which Bengal was placed and urged that the present ministry was better than a League ministry.

In December, Calcutta was bombed and that added to the panic considerably. For one year however people had lived away from Calcutta, which led to all sorts of complications. When the

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bombs actually fell, although the exodus continued in respect of illiterate people who were mostly non-Bengali, the middle-class Bengali population was more or less indifferent. There was some loss of life no doubt but Calcutta took the attack bravely.

At that time I was staying at Madhupur for a few days, and from there I proceeded to Cawnpore to attend the All-India Hindu Sabha session. This being my first public appearance outside Calcutta after my resignation, there was a considerable enthusiasm amongst the people whom I addressed. We had repeatedly called upon the British Government to take right steps during the crisis then in existence, but our demand produced no effect. A considerable section of our people wanted that some direct action should be taken without delay. Savarkar, Moonje and others were entirely against it. Although a resolution was passed extending for further time and leaving the final decision to the President and the Working Committee, it was clear that this would be sabotaged at the proper time and nothing would come out of it.

On my return to Calcutta we organised the Hindu Sabha and carried on an agitation against the misrule of Herbert and his officers. It was then an open secret that the ministry was having a continued tug of war with the Governor, and its recommendations on vital matters were being turned down. When the budget for the year was introduced by Fazlul Haq, who had taken over the Finance portfolio, it was apparent that the ministry would not have a smooth passage over the budget session. My place had not been taken by any other Hindu minister, my party having unanimously decided to stay out of office in view of my resignation. It however was willing to give the ministry its full support. The Scheduled Caste members were also greatly perturbed as they had only one representative in the ministry and full advantage was taken by the League of the division in their rank. There were all sorts of reports about the Nawab of Dacca and he was made the main target of attack by the European party.

The price of rice was shooting up and it had reached about Rs 16 per maund. The Communist Party was carrying on a

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persistent propaganda against the ministry and it joined hands with the League for this purpose. A big demonstration of poorer people taken from the *bastis* was organised by them jointly and they were brought into the compound of the Legislature. They demanded rice, and Isphahanis generously offered several hundreds of rupees worth of rice at once. There were shootings in Dacca Jail and also in Berhampore Jail. Midnapore brought horrid tales of outrage on men and women and the ministry was unable to give any relief. Whatever it recommended was upset by the Governor. Fazlul Haq openly said so in the Legislature. I was mainly instrumental in making the ministers expose the hollowness of provincial autonomy on the floor of the Legislature.

The strength of the Opposition was increasing daily. The League and the Europeans had combined, and a number of Muslims and Scheduled Caste members deserted the ministerial party and joined the Opposition. The official Congress party went on rebuking the ministry and made it clear that its continuance depended on its charity. Actually however, the ministry did not suffer a defeat in the Assembly, although it had one or two very narrow escapes. Haq was carrying on discussions with the Governor who was urging him to bring in the Muslim League. We had no objection at any time to have a ministry representing all parties, including the League, provided the League was prepared to come and accept Fazlul Haq's leadership as Chief Minister. The League on the other hand maintained that while it was prepared to co-operate with any non-Muslim party, it would never join any ministry along with non-Muslim League, Muslims.

Just before the Budget was going to be over, the catastrophe came suddenly. Fazlul Haq was sent for by the Governor on the evening of the 29th, and he submitted to him his letter of resignation under coercion. He however did not disclose this to anybody. The next morning we heard of this when we went to the Assembly. It was by then all over, and his resignation had been accepted by the Governor the previous night. Haq said that the Governor had made two demands of him. First, he must completely repudiate my statement and speeches attacking the

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Governor, and this Haq refused to do. Secondly, he insisted that either Haq should himself form a ministry with the League or enable the Governor to do so by Haq tendering his own resignation.

Fazlul Haq had no business to resign then and there and sign a letter of resignation which had been previously typed and kept ready at Government House. His party men were furious and I could see evident signs of collapse and disintegration. The Speaker, Nausher Ali, who had been elected as our candidate in place of Azizul Haque, accepted our suggestion and adjourned the House for three weeks. The Budget had not been passed completely at that time and we knew that this adjournment beyond 31st of March, which was the last date within which the Budget must be passed, would compel the Governor to take recourse to Section 93. The Governor, however, wanted that the session should go on without the Chief Minister, which of course none of us was prepared to support. There was a constitutional deadlock and after telephonic talks between Calcutta and Delhi the resignation of all the ministers was demanded, and accepted, and on the evening of 31st March, Bengal became a Section 93 province.

A Governor's Budget was passed to save the situation. There was a great public uproar and a huge demonstration was organised which was addressed by Fazlul Haq and others. Large numbers of Hindus and Muslims combined, and we maintained that a ministry which was enjoying a clear majority in the legislature had been got rid of by the unconstitutional acts of the Governor who found the ministry too independent for him. We demanded the recall of Sir John Herbert, and Bengal witnessed an agitation which reminded the people of *Swadeshi* days of thirty-two years ago.

The Governor however was determined to install the League in office. He sent for Nazimuddin and asked him to form a ministry. The difficulty was about Hindu ministers. The Caste Hindus were solidly united but there was ample division among the Scheduled Caste members. We were betrayed however at the last moment. Goswami, Pain and Tarak Mookherjee made some

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excuse or other and joined the League. They were supported by three Caste Hindus; Atul Kumar, Narendranarayan Chakraborti and Jatindra Nath Chakraborti. Three Scheduled Caste ministers were appointed in place of one in our time, and barring a few Scheduled Caste members, the rest supported the League. There was a Muslim demonstration organised by the League, welcoming the ministry, and the Hindu ministers stood up to defend their action.

Food was the main problem in those days. Before the Haq ministry went out of office, the Governor made them agree to a policy of decontrol of prices. Before the Cabinet finally decided this, there was a conference at the office of Naliniranjan Sarkar which was attended by Haq, Santosh Bose, Pramatha and myself. I persistently asked that the ministers must not agree to this and boldly face the crisis. But the ministers failed to assert themselves. A few days before the dissolution of the Haq ministry, Pramatha was appointed Minister of Civil Supplies with a new Director of Civil Supplies, A.D.C. Williams. Pinnel ran away from his office complaining of a nervous breakdown, but this he did after he had completely ruined Bengal. Roxborough was brought from the High Court but he also ran away very soon.

Pramatha's appointment was welcomed by Europeans and others but he had hardly any time given to him to organise the department. It was decided to have an Advisory Council regarding food, and Naliniranjan Sarkar was asked to become its President. He had resigned his membership of the Viceroy's Council during Gandhiji's fast and had come with fresh laurels on his forehead. The Haq ministry got the Bengal Government to agree to the fact that there was a serious shortage of food in Bengal and unless the Government of India came to the rescue of the province, dark days were ahead. Just at this moment the ministry went out of office.

When the Nazimuddin ministry came into power, it carried on a persistent propaganda that there was actually no shortage of food but that there was a maladministration accompanied by hoarding. This was the main burden of its propaganda. It

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refused to recognise the simple fact that famine conditions had started, and in fact all such pronouncements were sought to be suppressed ruthlessly. The ministry summoned the legislature a few months later in order to pass its Budget. On a point of order raised by me, regarding validity of the Budget which was brought in parts, the Speaker upheld the point and declared that the Budget was out of order. The House had to be prorogued and we had to wait for another session when the entire Budget was brought in. The ministry was however successful in getting to its side substantial support from different classes of members. Both Nazimuddin and Suhrawardy came to me before forming the ministry. But I told them pointedly that we could never co-operate with them unless they took representatives of Fazlul Haq's and Shamsuddin's parties, which included forty to fifty members who had loyally worked with us. This however they persistently declined to do.

In February 1943, a great commotion was created throughout India on account of Gandhiji's fast at Poona. The Government refused to release him which was the main object of his fast. The Government announced that he would be released during the fast but he maintained he would carry on the fast even if he was released. He therefore remained a prisoner technically and the fast continued. There was a demand for his unconditional release from all parts of India and in this matter the Mahasabha took a leading part. A conference representing all parties met in Delhi over which Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru presided. The Muslim League refused to join this conference and indeed did not even press for his release. The fast was taken for twenty-one days and at one stage it seemed that he was going to succumb. Ultimately however, he managed to escape death and there was a sense of intense relief throughout the country.

The situation in Bengal was becoming more and more critical on account of food shortage. The new ministry failed to tackle the problem. Indeed, it did not enjoy the confidence of Hindus at all and Muslims were divided in their loyalty. If the Bengal ministry had dealt with the problem with the help of all parties, it might have been solved to some extent. Further, it should have never

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started the cry that there was no shortage in Bengal which was exactly the reverse of the truth. A large number of sufferers from the rural areas started coming towards the towns in search of food. The sight of starving people moving about the streets of Calcutta and begging for a little food was something unimaginable. They started taking whatever they could get from any source available, including street corners and dustbins. Reports of death due to starvation were reaching us. It was tragic that a strict operation of D.I. Rules prevented the truth from being known to the people at large and particularly to provinces outside Bengal. In the Legislature, the ministry took up a most stubborn attitude and all our appeals and speeches were dubbed as mere party and political propaganda. One of my statements was banned under the D.I. Rules and this was justified by the Government of India in the Council of State. My statement was said to be an over-dramatization of facts. There was not the least doubt that if arrangements had been made at that time for importing foodgrains from outside Bengal and even outside India—as indeed we had demanded repeatedly—there would have been much less agony and distress for the people and lacs of lives saved.

I went to Bombay some time in July 1943, and started my propaganda for collecting funds for organising non-official relief. Before that, a representative committee was formed in Calcutta with Sir Badridas Goenka as Chairman and myself as Vice-Chairman. In addition to this we had a relief committee organised by the Mahasabha. The response that came from all parts of India from men, women and children, rich and poor, was something unimaginable. But there was difficulty in carrying out our plans. Men wanted food and not money, and foodgrains were hardly available. If foodgrains came, there were no means of communications to carry them to the distressed areas. Free supply of gruel and cheap supply of raw foodgrains constituted our main relief work.

Details of the famine conditions need not be discussed here. They will be found from the Assembly proceedings and statements issued by various people from time to time. There was

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not the least doubt that more lives would have been sacrificed if we had not organised public opinion effectively and roused it throughout India and even abroad. The part played by *The Statesman* in exposing maladministration was extremely commendable. It showed great courage of conviction, and by its pictures and articles it staggered public opinion through the civilized world. The ministry was openly accused of helping profiteers and sharing ill-gotten games. It however was wholly unconcerned as regards what was happening because it had the backing of the Europeans and the bureaucracy, and also managed to purchase the votes of the majority of members in the Legislature.

While millions died for want of food, an equal number followed the grave on account of illness and malnutrition. Then came want of cloth, and people died in thousands during winter for want of shelter and protection. The whole atmosphere was nauseating. A Government that claimed itself to be civilized was carrying on its administration smoothly, and was even running a war, and allowed millions of its subjects to wither away for want of food, medicine and raiment. If it had been in other countries, such a Government would have been blown to pieces in no time. There would have been food-riots and rebellion in the land. But our men being what they were and our country being what it was, everything was attributed to fate and people quietly died without raising even a murmur.

I was specially charged with having made political use of a situation that was so serious. My whole energy and attention were employed for organising relief, irrespective of party and communal considerations, and I often wished that instead of making a hopeless attempt to save lives against tremendous odds and difficulties, we should have organised resistance so that the machinery of the Government might have been uprooted. My articles were translated and published in a book form (*Panchasher Manantar*; Bengal Publishers), and will give some idea of the acute nature of the problems that confronted us in the dark days of 1943.

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In December 1943, the Mahasabha session was held at Amritsar. Savarkar at first expressed his intention to withdraw from the presidential election but ultimately he stuck to the nomination. He however did not come to Amritsar and I had to preside over the session. I had been touring in almost all parts of India and was amazed at the response that I got from everywhere. At Amritsar we had a colossal gathering and at some periods I had difficulty in controlling the audience. My firm and tactful handling however saved the situation at every stage and we had a successful session on the whole. People approved of our standpoint but there was a general desire that at some stage we must take recourse to direct action, so as to make the Government feel that we meant what we said, and also for people at large to feel confidence in our activities. The older leadership of the Mahasabha however was definitely against any such move. The war situation, the Bengal famine, and internal difficulties stood in the way of our taking action in those days.

In 1944, there were rumours that Gandhiji, who had since been released, was going to surrender to Jinnah on the issue of Pakistan. We had a meeting of the All-India Working Committee in Delhi and Savarkar expressed his definite view that such a move would soon take place. Soon after Gandhiji's release, Naliniranjan Sarkar went to see him in Bombay and so did Sir Badridas Goenka. We specially asked them to tell Gandhiji that there should be no longer any attempt to appease the Muslim League, and no commitment of any kind to be made before the Congress leaders were released and particularly without consulting us with regard to Bengal. Both of them came back to Calcutta and said that they were definitely given to understand that there was no talk of any compromise, and Gandhiji asked everyone to remain fully assured on this point. When Savarkar raised his doubts at the meeting of the All-India Working Committee I remonstrated and said that I had inside information that there was no possibility of any such commitment at all.

Before I left Delhi however, I was startled to find an announcement that the famous Rajagopalachari Formula conceding the principle of Pakistan was secretly approved by

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Gandhiji while he was undergoing his fast at Poona in 1942, and negotiations with Jinnah had started on that basis. I issued a statement from Allahabad strongly protesting against this act of surrender and betrayal. After I returned to Calcutta we organised public opinion but found a great change in the minds of those who were responsible for moulding public opinion. The Communist Party which all along had played a shameless role in attacking the foundation of Indian nationalism was applauding the move taken by Rajagopalachari. Our first meeting at the Calcutta University Institute was broken by them as we were not prepared for such a treacherous move on their part.

I went to Poona in August 1944, to deliver an inaugural address on the occasion of the Tilak anniversary. There was a record attendance at the public meeting which I addressed, and I condemned Gandhiji's new move as something highly detrimental to the interest of Hindus and also to the country as a whole. I met Gandhiji at Wardha on my way back to Calcutta and had a long talk with him in the presence of Rajagopalachari. I warned him that Jinnah would never agree to what he offered and he would merely lower the cause of Indian unity and nationalism by his proposed surrender. In fact Jinnah had already announced at Lahore, that although Gandhi had said he was prepared to accept the Lahore Resolution embodying Pakistan, passed in 1940, what he had offered to the League was a mutilated truncated and dishonest form of Pakistan which Jinnah was not going to accept. Gandhiji could not give me any convincing reply, but he said that at momentous periods of his life he had acted according to his inner voice which made him understand what was right and proper.

Within a few weeks the Gandhi-Jinnah interview took place and we had a most distressing and humiliating spectacle of Gandhiji's abject surrender and his attempt to compromise with truth. Jinnah failed to respond to Gandhiji's concession. As Gandhiji did not make any further concession he broke away from the discussion. People supporting him said that it meant a victory for Gandhiji, and Jinnah stood exposed. I believe however that such was not the case. Hitherto, no one was

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prepared to look at the idea of India's partition in any form or shape. Now for the first time, Gandhiji, though speaking unofficially but yet the friend, guide and philosopher of the Congress, was prepared to concede that India might be partitioned in some way other than the extreme form of Jinnah's Pakistan. And that was a great surrender which would ultimately hurt the cause of India's integrity and freedom.

Jinnah stood nothing to lose from the breakdown of these talks. He had got Gandhiji accept the principle of partition of India though there were yet vital differences between his scheme and Gandhiji's. When the next talk would take place, further surrender would have to be made and what Gandhiji offered in 1944, would then be made the starting point for making fresh bargains. We roused public opinion throughout India and although we found that most people hated the idea of India's partition, many of the newspapers who so long had condemned Rajagopalachari were silenced as if by a magic wand and were trying to invent excuses for supporting Gandhiji's statesmanship.

We suffered tremendously in Bengal on account of this sudden change-over on the part of Gandhiji. We had yet with us about fifty Muslims who were opposing the League and sat with us in the opposition all determined to turn out the League. In fact what the Congress failed to do during its days of glory and power we succeeded in achieving in Bengal during periods of adversity. Fire-eaters and staunch supporters of Pakistan by their continued association with us were convinced that the future of Bengal lay in consolidating all nationalist elements and not in encouraging the forces of disruption and disunion. When however they found that Gandhiji—which meant the Congress—was going to make a compromise with Jinnah under any circumstances whatsoever and recognise the Muslim League as the most powerful champion of Muslim interest, they thought it wise and prudent to desert us and join the League. Thus member after member ran away from us and our opposition Coalition Party stood the chance of being disintegrated. We however did not lack in our enthusiasm for breaking the ministry at any cost, and it was not till March 1945, that we succeeded in doing so.

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In December 1944, the Mahasabha session took place at Bilaspur. Savarkar had announced this time definitely that he was not going to stand for election as President, and I was elected as his successor with complete unanimity. We had a successful session at Bilaspur and my speech, and the programme adopted there, indicated the national outlook of the Mahasabha and its desire to serve the highest interest of the country irrespective of every minor consideration.

1945 was thus a year of great responsibility for me and found me touring from one part to the other, mobilising the elements that constituted the main support of the Mahasabha. I could feel however that we had stupendous difficulties before us. Many of our men were not prepared to vitalise the organisation in a way that would bring us in direct contact with the masses. Ours is not a political problem alone. The social fabric of Hindus requires drastic changes if we are ever to be well-knit as one great society which in a consolidated manner will work for the uplift and freedom of India. In the economic sphere also, the rule of exploitation disfigures our society in a marked way, and unless we can raise the level of the poor and the down-trodden, it is useless to expect they should have any sympathy towards our organisation. While therefore our schemes, our policy and programme on paper were completely unchallengeable, I failed to collect a band of enthusiastic workers who would make the carrying of such a policy and programme as the mission of their lives. Many undesirable persons had taken hold of our organisation in different parts of India and it was neither possible to remove them nor to shake their lethargy into unified action. Still my tours led to one result, namely, our ideology was made widely known and we reached the masses more intimately than we ever did before.

The war situation was improving and the collapse of Germany also came with startling rapidity. Russia's enormous manpower and unprecedented determination helped to turn the tide. America's resources and her production gave added strength to Russia's unique stand. England's luck again became ascendant and the fall of Hitler was imminent. Perhaps when the fate of a

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nation becomes absorbed in the movement of one individual however eminent, resourceful and lucky for the time being, reaction is bound to come. And when such reaction comes, the energies of the people are shattered to pieces and the entire machinery falls down like a house of cards. Although ten millions of armed men were still standing outside Germany to fight on behalf of the Germans, their morale had broken down and they collapsed.

It was known immediately that Japan's fall also would be a question of time. The Germans did their best to invent the atomic bomb but here also they were beaten, and America won the race. Whether the atomic bomb finished Japan more quickly or not is even now a matter of speculation. In any case Japan also fell suddenly. Here too Japan's defeat, from one point of view, was the defeat of Asia. Japan's imperialism and her anxiety to rob China and other neighbours of their rightful ownership was a colossal mistake. If Japan had remained less ambitious and had consolidated the Asiatic countries into a pan-Asiatic federation, Asia's supremacy would never had been at the feet of Europe and America. Japan paid the price of her folly by not only sacrificing herself but the rest of Asia as well.

With the end of the war there could be no further question of keeping the leaders in jail and a policy of release was steadily given effect to. The leaders came out and received a tremendous ovation from the people at large. There was a swing of the pendulum in complete favour of the Congress and people became mad about the leaders. Simultaneously, with the release of the leaders, Lord Wavell came out with his new plan for ending the deadlock. He was prepared to have an interim government at the Centre under the existing Constitution and invited the co-operation of the political parties. After the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks, two other outstanding events had taken place from the non-official side leading towards some sort of settlement.

The Sapru Committee, which I believe was the outcome of Gandhiji's inspiration, came with an interim report recommending the acceptance of parity between Caste Hindus and Muslims

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in the formation of an interim national government. A condition was mentioned that the Muslims must agree to a joint electorate. We however realised at once the enormous mischief that such a proposal was going to make with regard to Hindu interests. No one would think of doing away with a separate electorate, but the proposal of parity would he looked upon as both desirable and possible by H.M.G. and would now have the added support of a non-official committee of so-called impartial statesmen and politicians such as the Sapru Committee was dubbed to be.

In January, 1945, there were also reports of pacts between Bhulabhai Desai, leader of the Congress Parliamentary party in the Central Assembly, and Mr Liaquat Ali Khan, Deputy Leader of the Muslim League party. Here again it was stated that the Congress leader had agreed to accept partity between itself and the Muslim League. It was rumoured that all these proposals had the backing of Gandhiji who was however deluding himself and the country by the suggestion that he was merely acting in his individual capacity. The Desai-Liaquat Ali Pact was denied by the persons concerned and later on it transpired that this denial was also a deliberate falsehood played upon the people at large. With the release of political leaders, and their partial condemnation of the spirit of compromise and surrender made in their absence, all these acts of betrayal were gradually passed over.

The Wavell Plan became the talk of the country. Here the Mahasabha was excluded deliberately from invitation. When the war started, Lord Linlithgow called the Mahasabha. When Cripps came, the Mahasabha was one of the parties that received his first invitation. In every session of the Round Table Conference the Mahasabha was there as an invitee. But suddenly in June, 1945, it was thought expedient that the Mahasabha should be excluded altogether from consultation. An excuse was offered that we had no party as such in the Central Legislature, but so had the Sikhs and the Scheduled Castes none, but yet they were invited. Gandhiji thought ours was a religious body—a palpable misrepresentation which astounded many of his supporters.

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I took the leading part in opposing the Wavell Plan on two main considerations. First, the principle of parity was grossly unfair and unjust to the Hindus. Sixty per cent of India's population was to be treated as equal to twenty-four per cent. The division of Hindus into Caste Hindus and Scheduled Castes was a perpetuation of a political mischief of the first magnitude. Secondly, the Wavell plan did not constitute any transfer of power at all, as the administration would continue under the Government of India Act of 1919. The Viceroy's veto power, the overriding authority of the Secretary of State, and the rigours of the Constitution, would all function and there would be a mere change in the personnel of the Executive Council. The meetings that I organised throughout India were tremendously successful.

At one time it was felt that Lord Wavell was determined to push on with his scheme if the Congress gave its support, not-withstanding any opposition from the League or from any other party. Panels of names were called for and the Congress included my name in its panel without consulting me. There was no question of my accepting a seat on the Viceroy's Executive Council through the back-door. If my organisation was not recognised as such and if the scheme itself was open to grave objection, a seat on the Executive Council was utterly meaningless.

Jinnah however threw out the scheme as he maintained that all the Muslim members must be nominated by the League and not by anyone else. Further, he was not satisfied with parity with the Caste Hindus. He distrusted every one and he wanted equality with the rest of India. His amazing impudence was the product of British patronage and Congress appeasement. People thought that even if Jinnah proved to be obstinate, the Viceroy would go on with his scheme, leaving the Muslim League in the cold shade of neglect. But ultimately the Viceroy gave a slap to the Congress on its face which humiliated itself by accepting the scheme and even recognising Lord Wavell as the new leader of India. He declared that he would not proceed with his plan. This saved the Congress and it soon re-established itself in the affection and the confidence of the people of India. It was

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announced that elections would shortly take place and further action was to be taken by H.M.G. on the completion of the Central and Provincial elections.

Meanwhile, the part played by Subhas Bose became widely known and this staggered the whole of India. The Azad Hind Fauj which he organised in Burma and in other parts of South Asia became known to the people of India, and everyone realised what an amazing act of daring, patriotism, and organisation it must have been. At one stage Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru announced that if Subhas Bose came to India with the help of Japan he would, if necessary, go out and fight with him single handed with a sword in his hand. When however he realised what a stupendous part Subhas had played in organising the Indian National Army, Nehru slowly changed over and started admiring the activities of the I.N.A.

It was indeed a strange spectacle. The Congress policy of non-violence, and the policy of organised violence and revolutionary activities propounded by Subhas had nothing common to each other. Yet, the Congress utilised the new situation to its best advantage which was made available to it by the folly of the Government who decided to send up some of the I.N.A. officers for an open trial by court martial. The Central Assembly elections were thus held in the midst of a tidal wave. What with the release of Congress leaders and workers with the open applauding of the activities that shook India in 1942; with the bravery of Subhas and his I.N.A.; the people of India, particularly Hindus, were swept off their feet.

The Congress leaders met in Bombay and they were definitely against Pakistan. This gave them added strength. They started speaking against the Muslim League and Mr Jinnah in the same strain as the Mahasabha used to do, and people thought that there was hardly any difference between the Congress and the Mahasabha. The Congress however moved in a very subtle way. It was against Pakistan but it supported self-determination for territorial units. And the latter meant that India's partition was acceptable to the Congress under some circumstances.

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Thus there are three schemes for partitioning India today. One is the Cripps scheme; the second is the Muslim League scheme of Pakistan which is wholly communal and dependent on Muslim opinion alone; and the third is the Congress scheme of self-determination for territorial units.

The Hindus however did not realise the need for having a strong bloc of their own, who would stand up for the unity and integrity of India and would not allow any sacrifice to be made of their legitimate political rights. Hindus throughout India stood by the Congress so far as the Central Assembly elections were concerned. Muslims with equal determination stood by the League, and the Congress failed to carry one Muslim seat either directly or indirectly. The Congress also lost two seats reserved for Sikhs in the Punjab. Thus the Congress goes into power to the Central Legislature with the votes of Hindus alone, and yet they will never speak for or defend Hindu rights or fight uncompromisingly for the complete unity and integrity of India.

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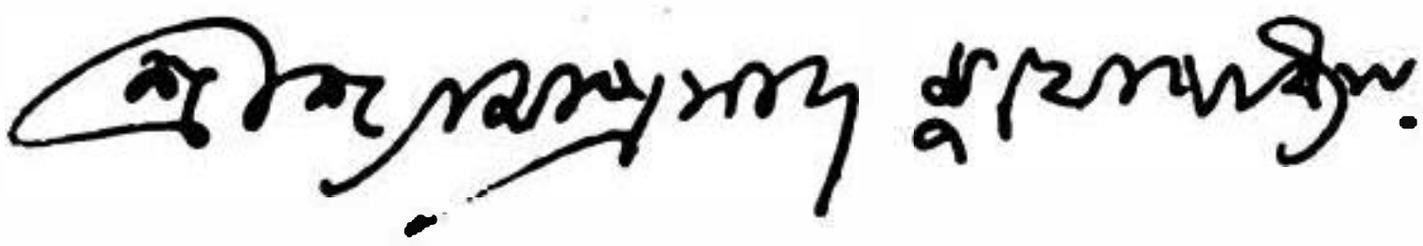
The Bengali Diary



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Madhupur

3 January, 1946, 6 p.m.

It is after two years that I have resumed this diary. During this period, I had often thought of writing but could not continue at length. So many events have occurred over these two years; but it is not an easy task to record all of them. So, during my month-long stay at Madhupur I have decided to write only a brief account of these events. I do not know how far I will be successful in doing so.

I came to Madhupur on 25th December. I had suddenly fallen ill a month earlier. I had been very busy with the elections at that time. My illness took a somewhat serious turn and consequently, I opted out of the electoral contest. I have come here to rest and recuperate. My mind is in such a turmoil. Will it be possible for me to express all my feelings in writing? Let me try by recounting what happened during the elections.

The Working Committee of the Hindu Mahasabha met in Delhi in September. There it was decided that the Mahasabha would field its own candidates for the elections. This was at the time when the Congress leaders were being released—they had been imprisoned during the 1942 movement. They set about trying to extend the influence of the Congress with renewed vigour. Over the past three years, the Hindu Mahasabha had been protesting against the Raj and had demanded the release of the imprisoned Congress leaders. They had always come forward to serve the nation in times of crisis, and had tried their utmost to protect the Hindus from oppression at the instance of the Muslim League and the British.

The Hindu Mahasabha had also helped in many other ways, the details of which need not be recounted here. The Muslim League had gained influence, not only due to the patronage of the British, but the Congress and its leaders had also pandered to the League's whimsical demands. Gandhiji and other eminent personalities had literally prostrated themselves before Jinnah. The strength of the League grew as a result of such harmful

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indulgence. However much I disliked the League, and criticized its policies as being detrimental to India's freedom struggle, it must be admitted, that within a short time the League had miraculously infused the Muslim masses with a new spirit. They began thinking in terms of establishing a Muslim state in the Muslim-dominated areas and bolstering their own image and culture. But alas ! the Hindus never thought or worked on those lines. The Congress was the Hindus' major political organization. I was fully aware of the fact that the Congress was responsible for creating an awareness for the freedom of India among the people, but at the same time it had failed to infuse the Hindus with any zeal to thwart the political aspirations of the Muslims to form a new Pakistan. Here, the Hindu Mahasabha played a major role. We all wanted a free India, but we were not prepared to exchange servitude to the British for servitude to Pakistan. We did not want that the flag of Islam should be unfurled in India, or any part of it. Anyway, as seventy-five per cent of the population were Hindus, and if India was to adopt a democratic form of government, the Hindus would automatically play a major role in it. We were just not willing to entertain any proposal to partition India.

In spite of all that has been said in favour of the Hindu Mahasabha, I knew where its weakness lay. Even though the logic behind our statements was irrefutable, we had failed to keep our struggle in line with our convictions. The people of this country, especially the Hindus, wanted an organization that could call upon its workers to sacrifice everything. During the past four years, I had repeatedly said that our organization should launch an active movement for the protection of the Hindus and for the freedom of the country. If we could do that, then those who had joined us for selfish ends would leave, and we would be able to win the confidence of the people. It is true that the Hindu Mahasabha displayed a lot of courage and a spirit of sacrifice during the Hyderabad *satyagraha* and our Bhagalpur session, but despite my efforts, the Sabha was not able to launch an all-India movement. Even though my proposal was accepted in the open session of the Sabha, problems always arose when it

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came to implementing it. Savarkar had never agreed with me on this. Perhaps he believed that our supporters could help us form a government, and that this would give us the strength to tackle the work later. But his views on the subject aside, even though the people had accepted us more or less, they were not willing to give us preference over the Congress. This was amply proved during the Central Assembly elections.

At our Delhi meeting in September, I reiterated that before the elections, we should launch a movement based on specific issues, such as the undesirability of holding elections on the basis of the Communal Award—it had been foisted on the Hindus as a form of political oppression. Such gross injustice could not be perpetuated, considering that the country's future depended on the result of the elections. Alternatively, some other important issue could also be taken up. But our committee did not accept my proposal.

From Delhi, I went on to tour many parts of the country. A new Hindu consciousness seemed to be awakening. People had come to understand that a compromise with the issue for the formation of Pakistan was not possible. Ever since the Congress leaders had begun voicing this opinion, the people at large had stopped considering the Hindu Mahasabha to be that relevant. The Congress was taking refuge under a big bluff. While it was on one hand against the formation of Pakistan, on the other it was ready to allow self-determination for territorial units and did not wish to force anyone to stay within India against his will. Jinnah Saheb was not willing to stay in India—he had clearly stated his desire to carve out a Muslim state. The Congress, on the principle of self-determination, was willing to part with Sind, N.W.F.P., half of Punjab and Bengal. In other words, if the people of the Muslim-dominated areas wished to break away, the Congress would not stop them. We objected to this vehemently because it meant the fragmentation of India. The Congress and the League only differed on the mode and extent of the country's truncation. Cripps, too, had come with a draft plan for the division of India, but his plan was different. Only the Hindu Mahasahha had asserted that India should not be divided at any

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cost and that the entire country should opt for a democratic form of government. For this reason alone the Hindu Mahasabha was dubbed as a communal organization. If you could get the Press on your side and displayed enough lung power, then you could depict falsehood as the truth, and vice versa. That was politics !

I returned to Calcutta in September. I had always held, that irrespective of what happened in other parts of India, there should never be a conflict between the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha in Bengal. It is necessary to give a background of this, but I don't think that I shall write more on this subject today. I shall try to write about it tomorrow. Let me now write about something else.

I have been here for the last ten days. My heart trouble has worsened. My mother, Antu, Keno's (my maternal uncle's son) wife and his daughter are here with me. Baridbaran is also here with us. Santu boarded the train with us at Asansol when we were coming to Madhupur. He stayed with me for two days. He came over again last Saturday. Biju also arrived that day. They both left on the 1st. My health has not improved as much as I had thought it would. The pain recurs often and I suffer a lot then. It even becomes difficult for me to breathe. I fear that I will not be able to bear it any longer. Even though the pain subsides, the weakness persists. I don't know whether this is because of the heart or because of flatulence ? Dr Deben Mazumdar is taking good care of me. I am taking medicines and injections regularly. I feel a little better today. There has been no pain but I have constipation and I have no appetite left. My daily walks are restricted to the garden. The body and mind are so interdependent !

Let me continue with the elections. I had not expected that events would take the turn they did. But that did not bother me unduly. I put in a concerted effort to go on working selflessly as far as I could. I did whatever I could do for the organization and for the country, but if that work was not appreciated, I did not bear any grudge. Perhaps my efforts failed because there was something lacking in my approach. But I did not even once think that the country would fall into ruin just because my untiring

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efforts had failed to safeguard its interests. It was wrong to think that way. What was I worth ? With the grace of God, I had the opportunity to accomplish a lot over the past forty-five years, and I was grateful for it. It is true that I never let any hurdles obstruct the path that I had chosen to follow. I also never allowed any personal defeat drive me to harm the nation.

It is no use being angry with my countrymen for rejecting the services that I or my organization offered. I shall go on working according to the dictates of my conscience and shall strive to serve the country to the best of my ability. Perhaps everybody will not understand the joy one gets of working selflessly without an eye to the reward.

But I am despondent for other reasons. I feel so lonely. I have not yet found a place where I can find solace and peace of mind. What is the aim of this life ? Wallowing in luxury and pleasure ? Certainly not ! We are here only in transit and will have to move on. It is not as though I have not enjoyed the pleasures of life. But now I am confronted with doubts. I have had my share of doing both right and wrong. At times, I have acted with courage, and sometimes I have succumbed to my weaknesses. I feel very lonely and my health is breaking down. It is not as though I fear death. But I do not want to suffer a slow and painful death. My fervent desire is to die in harness ; struggling and striving for the truth when the end finally comes. But will it be so ? I have been lucky to have had the chance to serve many people in this life. It is not meet that I should be vain and proud about the fact that, with a few exceptions, I have never asked anyone for any obligations. I am in fact a very tender-hearted and humble person.

I have been through a lot of stress and emotional strain over the years. Everything seemed dark when at the age of twenty-three I lost my father. I could not believe that we would ever recover from that blow. But God was kind. He helped me climb up the ladder of success. There were so many obstacles in my way, but they were removed ; there were conspiracies against me, which failed ; and finally truth prevailed. The University, and then the vast arena of political and social life ; the meetings

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and conferences—I have sailed through them all without making any compromise whatsoever. The sacred memory of my father was always my best talisman. The only thing I could not manage to accomplish, was to be rich. I could have done that too, if I had tried. But the Goddess Lakshmi was not that kind. This, of course, created problems for the family. It put a lot of pressure on my eldest brother. I did not save any money, and whatever I earned was spent on my family, my personal expenses and on the service of others. I never maintained any account book, nor was I thrifty.

In 1933, when my wife suddenly left me, I went through a terrible emotional upheaval. I loved her with my very soul and she, too, thought the world of me. I had never dreamt that she would pass away so soon. Over the past twelve years I have learnt how difficult it is to bring up children. But it would have been impossible for me to have brought them up had it not been for my *Boudi*. The children perhaps are not aware of their indebtedness to her. Excepting Santu, they have all forgotten their mother—maybe they recollect her faintly and sometimes grieve over the fact that they have no mother. They care for me and love me dearly too. On my part, I have always wished them the best of everything. I look upon them as gifts from Sudha. I cherish the fragrance of her memory as she lives on through her children.

4 January, 1946

Force must, in the last analysis, be met with force. An internal policy of non-resistance to armed violence would ultimately condemn any society to dissolution. Let me try to complete what I began writing yesterday about the elections. I never wanted the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha to be at loggerheads with each other in Bengal. Before touring the various provinces in August, I discussed this point with Kiron Sankar Roy and Bidhan Roy. During the last six years, it had been my endeavour that our parties should work together despite our differences.

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There were plenty of opportunities I could have taken advantage of to promote the Hindu Mahasabha, if indeed that had been my aim. But I refrained from doing so because I believed that both the parties were needed equally in Bengal. There was absolute necessity for the existence of a political party, exclusively for the Hindus, to counter the British and Muslim League conspiracy against the Hindus. This party would not hinder India's struggle for freedom, but it would support it, and at the same time it would try its utmost to give protection to the Hindus. I had always wanted the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha to work together on the basis of such an understanding.

The factionalism within the Congress in Bengal come into the open and spread all over India. Subhas opposed Gandhiji and was driven out of the Congress. His followers were also rebuffed by the Congress. The Sarat Bose group too disobeyed the dictates of the Congress High Command and split. The Congress could not become a strong force in Bengal for these reasons. When the Hindu Mahasabha was set up under my leadership, I did not quarrel with either of the two groups. I maintained good relations with them and in times of crisis I tried to find ways for us to work together.

Nobody knew, not even the Congress, that Sarat Bose would get released from jail. From the beginning, Kiron Babu's group had been in favour of an electoral understanding with us. This arose partly from a realization of their own weakness, and partly from a desire to arrive at a compromise with us. Then Sarat Bose was suddenly released. All of us had, of course, launched a movement earlier for his release. We all felicitated him and brought him home. We all hoped that he would jointly work with us to save Bengal. Our hopes were raised when he spoke against the Wavell Plan, the Simla Conference, and self-determination. But we noticed that he was only fond of talking. From the very beginning, he was inclined to criticize Jawaharlal. Some of his rude remarks were often irrelevant. He even went to the extent of dubbing Chiang Kai-shek a traitor of his country. When I got acquainted with him, I discovered that he was quite an egotist. This was, I suppose, only natural, considering the fervour with

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which the people had received him back. At any rate, he told me that he was willing to work jointly with us, and that the details would be worked out after his return from Bombay. There he received a tumultous welcome. This probably went to his head, and he started comparing the mass response accorded to him with the reception given to Gandhiji.

After his return to Bengal I had another talk with him. I wanted three of the eight seats in the Central Assembly, or two of the six general seats. I did not want there to be any party candidate for the two special seats. The discussion went on for several days. Finally, he told me over the telephone that he was not willing to leave more than two seats for us. I had already said that Anandamohan Poddar, the president of the Narayanganj Hindu Mahasabha, would get the Mahajan Sabha seat. Therefore, two seats meant one for Poddar and one for me. I wanted a general seat for Sanat Roy Choudhury too. Since Sarat Bose was not willing to part with more than two seats, I told him that there would be a contest. I left Calcutta the same night. Perhaps if we had met and negotiated then and there, the disputes that followed could have been avoided.

When I returned to Madhupur from the Mandar Hills, I learnt that Sarat Babu had agreed to allot two of the six general seats to us, and that the Congress representatives had also been given to understand that. I wrote to Sarat Babu immediately that in that case, there was no cause for dispute. But he replied unequivocally that he had agreed only to allot two of the eight seats and not two of the six general seats. I returned to Calcutta. Well-wishers of both parties met several times. I told them what I had asked for. In a speech at Deshbandhu Park, Sarat Babu made several sarcastic and critical remarks about me. He lied that he had agreed to allot us two of the six seats. I wrote to him that if this were so, then conciliation was still possible ; but his reply was accusatory. I kept my cool and answered him. He was just not in a mood to compromise. His excuse was that it was too late and that the High Command was against it, etc.

Several hurdles came in the way of my standing as a candidate. I had decided to stand from the Burdwan division.

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Sarat Babu knew about this. It transpired that he would be standing from there too. Since it would not seem proper to contest against him, I decided to stand from Calcutta instead. On hearing this, he filed his nomination papers from both places. I then decided to stand from the Calcutta suburbs. From our group, Sanat Roy Choudhury stood from Calcutta, Mayor Deben Mukhopadhyay from the Presidency division, Bankim Mukherjee, M.L.C., from Burdwan, I from the Calcutta suburbs and Naren Das from Barisal, etc. Monoranjan Choudhury stood from Chittagong, Rajshahi. From among the zamindars, we supported Rajendra Singha Singhi. I must write a bit about how these people conducted themselves.

Kshitish Neogy, who was the Congress candidate from Dacca, Mymensingh and Faridpore, met us while the talks with Sarat Babu were going on. Surya Basu (from Dacca) was present at the talks. Kshitish Neogy stated clearly that he would not stand from any party, specially not from the Congress. He made several derogatory remarks about Sarat Bose, calling him proud, egoistical, etc. He said that this was the reason why he was not willing to stand from any party. But he wanted to stand for the chairmanship of the Central Assembly. I suggested that he could stand from the Hindu Mahasabha, but he did not agree. Then I asked him to stand as an independent candidate supported by the Mahasabha. He said that he would think it over. In any case, he gave his word that he would not stand on the Congress ticket. Later, he sent his application to the Congress parliamentary board without informing us.

Anandamohan Poddar's behaviour was the most disappointing. It was because of him, to safeguard his interest, that I could not come to an understanding with Sarat Babu. I helped him to become the chairman of the Narayanganj municipality, and assisted him in other respects too. I also requested Tarit Roy's son to see to it that he could be elected uncontested. He never even gave us a hint that he would oppose us. He had met me several times and on those occasions had spoken vehemently against Sarat Bose and his group. But after he was elected uncontested he made a statement, without even bothering to

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inform us, that he would join the Congress. He also commented that those who had fallen out with the Congress over the allocation of seats were enemies of the country, etc. It was amazing that people could be so devious and disloyal. Ananda Poddar had no respect for anything—neither national integrity, nor social mores, nor the party, nor the views that I had propagated—nothing mattered for him. He only believed in pursuing his blatant self-interests unashamedly. Yet, the Congress leaders welcomed a man such as he with open arms. It did not strike them that someone who could deceive us, could never be of any service to the country, and that he was capable of betraying them with equal ease too.

Some other members of the Mahasabha deserted us in a similar manner. The first blow was struck by Gokulchand Narang of Punjab. He, in accordance with our wishes, had renounced the knighthood conferred upon him. At first he hesitated to stand for the Assembly, but later agreed to do so at my request. But eventually, he withdrew from the elections on a reassurance from the Punjab Congress leaders. His excuse was that it was no longer necessary to contest the elections and fight the Congress since the Congress too had professed that they would oppose and resist the Muslim League and the formation of Pakistan. He did not consider the dangerous consequences of self-determination on Punjab, nor did it occur to him that his stepping out without consulting me, and issuing statements supporting a particular policy would harm the image of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Mehr Chand Khanna of the Frontier Province played another game. Though he was the President of the Hindu Mahasabha, he joined hands with the Congress and became the private secretary of its Premier. But he did not leave the Hindu Mahasabha. He would not serve the Mahasabha, but at the same time would not give up his post either—this was his strange policy. I told him either to leave his post, or work exclusively for the betterment of the Mahasabha. He could choose between the two. He asked for some time to decide. He eventually left the Sabha, and tried to justify himself by making a statement that raked up old issues and was full of irrelevant details.

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8 January, 1946, 6.30 p.m.

I have not written this diary for two days. I have been writing about other things, trying to describe the major events of my life from the very beginning, in a new diary. I am writing that in Bengali and am keeping another short diary in English too. I have also resumed the dictation of the condensed account of the happenings of the last six years. This is being typed out in English.

Since yesterday, I have been all alone upstairs in my room. My mother and the others are downstairs. I entertain myself by reading, but books do not suffice as companions when my mind is disturbed. Antu, who was here with me for several days, helped me in many ways. We spent a lot of time talking. As I grow older, the gloomier side of staying alone strikes me. No doubt, books are good company. Good writers do not grapple with issues, but through their writings raise questions in one's mind. Reading a variety of books relieves the monotony of my days. I feel that I have developed a rapport with the authors, but I have no companion to share my thoughts with. Antu could not make up for the absence of such a companion, but it was a rewarding experience to watch the way my son's mind is developing.

I know fully well that I am an introvert. I have been burdened with responsibilities from a very young age. I used to have a streak of childishness in me, which I still have. However, I changed with the heavy responsibilities that life placed on me. I never found a close friend. The friends that I had in college have all gone their own ways. Whenever I meet them, I notice the distance that has grown between us. I spent all my time in the grind of work. I had no time for relaxation or entertainment. My work was always involved in conflicts and controversies. I did not find the peace of mind, I sought, in it. Falsehood, duplicity and deception—that is the stuff life is made of. Nothing but self-interest seems to matter. I have met very few people who have associated with me without any personal motives. If a person is constantly being torn apart by the vicissitudes of life, he is truly unfortunate. That is why my mind sometimes longs for

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someone who would regard me simply as a human being ; who would expect nothing from me, and would heal my wounds with his unbounded sympathy and affection. Only a relationship bereft of all self-interest can be lasting.

In 1933 when I lost Sudha, the pace of life had not become so hectic. I loved her deeply and had infinite faith in her. Whatever she had to offer, she showered upon me unhesitatingly. I cannot express in words the joy and happiness that I felt in the eleven years that she was with me. She was not very familiar with the world outside, and I was so immersed in university affairs that I had little time for much else.

I have still not got over the grief of losing Sudha, but I have the composure not to let my sorrow be known to the outside world. The very day after Santu and I performed her last rites, I went to the college, and also to the court, and kept all my other appointments. But it would be wrong to say that my heart was not rent with grief. The loss affected me, more emotionally, than physically. I am emotionally so dependent that I don't find any stability unless I have someone by my side to lend me strength. I did not consider marrying again, not only because of my intense love for Sudha, but because I had my children's welfare at heart. It was my duty to see that they did not feel the absence of their mother. It would not only have hurt their feelings to see a stranger usurp their mother's place but the other person's presence would perhaps have created other complications too. I have never hankered for physical pleasures so I didn't miss them. But I did need a person who would understand me and wish me well ; a person who would inspire me, empathize with me and respect my innermost sentiments.

Boudi took my children to her bosom and gave them a lot of affection. Without her, it would have been difficult to bring them up. Motherless children are often unduly sensitive, and they sometimes misunderstand things. If their sentiments are not handled with care, it can lead to a lot of complications. I do believe that my children understand how much they owe their aunt. They are aware of all that she has done for them, despite the occasional misunderstandings. They would not have been

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brought up properly had it not been for the tender care of their aunt. Her role in providing me with inspiration has been no less valuable. She could understand my deepest thoughts and realized that I was striken with grief, though I did not show it. In fact, it was she who pulled me through. When she came to our house in 1920, she was only eleven. I had gone with my father to see her at Sudhanath Babu's house, before her marriage. From the very beginning, I had wanted her to be my elder brother's wife and I let my father know my wish. We all of us shared our joys and sorrows for thirteen years; when Sudha suddenly left us.

Boudi and I sometimes took offence over the most trifling matters and quarrelled over them like little children. But we got over them easily and they left behind no trace of bitterness. It seems childish now that we quarrelled over such trivialities. When the tragedy struck, she willingly took charge of my children and I was grateful to her. On that dreadful night, my five-year-old daughter, Hasu, had wept near her mother's body and had clung to her aunt, crying, 'Let us go home, aunty.' Soon after, when Santu had an attack of typhoid, we got to know each other better. Before that, she used to go about her work quietly and never really talked to me much. When Santu's condition became critical, she nursed him with a mother's tender care. Quite amazingly, Santu came back from the jaws of death and recovered. Since then, over the years, I have found strength in the rare brand of fond affection that *Boudi* has showered on me.

I have tried to condition my mind and root out selfishness and ideas of personal gain. Over the last forty-five years, I have received several honours which would be highly valued conventionally. Why do men suffer? Man's egoism is the root of all trouble. If this consciousness of of 'me' and 'mine' could be eliminated, one could gain a serenity that cannot be understood by those who have not experienced it. But it is necessary to keep one thing in mind. If I leave everything to fate, with the feeling that I am inconsequential, then I will become incapable of putting in my best when the need arises. It would become difficult to fulfil my duties. God alone makes me work. I am just a pawn in His hands. His work must be done; whether through

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me, or another person. When He works through me, I shall consider myself fortunate and shall work to the best of my ability. I shall not be careless, or shirk my responsibility. It is immaterial whether or not I reap the benefits of my efforts. I shall try to follow the path ordained by Him. If I succeed, I will feel that my efforts have borne fruit. If I don't, I will feel that I have been found lacking in some ways. I shall try again, but if I realize that this was not the work ordained for me, I will not hesitate to abandon it and tread a new path. The most important thing is that I must shed my egotism or there can be no peace of mind.

I do not claim that I have always been able to conduct myself along these lines. I have tried my best to adhere to these principles, against all odds, in times of crises. When I have failed, I have tried to console myself in that there is no disgrace in defeat, and that either I have been remiss or that it was not the chosen path for me. The future would be dark if I could not rid myself of the notion that I was an indispensable person or that my deeds were the most outstanding. In the tranquillity of this haven, now, when my health is failing, I get some satisfaction in analyzing my mind. The success that I have achieved is His benefaction. Where I have made concerted efforts but have failed, I shall still get a sense of gratification, but where my efforts were wanting, I am the guilty one !

What is the greatest pleasure in life ? Immense wealth ? A life of physical pleasures and luxury ? Or a life shorn of responsibilities ? Are these what matter ? History shows us that such hedonism was always short lived. There is no doubt about the fact that poverty deprives one of peace and pleasure. I myself have suffered through this every now and then. But riches eventually mean nothing. What is desirable is to have a wife and children, maintain a good relationship with them and mould them according to one's ideals ; to lead a life, not of luxury, but of purity and discipline, a life of service. One should serve humanity in whatever way one can. The more one is able to devote oneself to the service of others, the more fortunate he is. Travelling around the world and exchanging views with people of different societies is imperative. Life should be based on

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complete equality and unity. Men should not despise or shun each other on the basis of caste, creed or religion, or look down on each other because of differences in occupation. I have noticed the importance of the sweepers in our house. If they do not come for even a day, the whole house stinks. Even though they do us such a great service, we call them untouchables. I do not like anything unclean—be it objects or human beings. But if their habits are clean, I would not hesitate to fraternize with them. I can understand the way superstition can demean men ; it is evident in the way we treat each others in our society.

It is almost 9.30 p.m. *Ma* has gone to sleep in the next room. There is a deep stillness and silence all around. Even the ticking of the clock seems too loud. I ask myself why my mind is in such turmoil. I have never learnt to pray openly to God. This is one of my greatest shortcomings. I believe in God, but I do not know who He is or in which incarnation He exists. I do not even want to know.

I am not a devotee of any particular deity. But I don't misunderstand those who do worship particular deities. Whoever God may be, whoever may have created this world and is responsible for its destruction, a devotee needs to have an image of his God before him when he prays. Such an image helps the mind to focus and concentrate. If we start considering this symbol as the absolute, then, whosoever God is, must be laughing at us. But if I use this symbol to invoke God and gain contentment thereby, then my purpose is fulfilled. The purpose of the whole thing is to pour one's heart and to pray with wholehearted devotion. But when is it that we pray ? When we are in travails; when our children are ill ; when we have lost our livelihood or property or suffered a setback. At such times, what else can we do but pray ? How many of us remember Him when we are not in trouble; when we are in the midst of abundance or comfort and not in the throes of sorrow and poverty ? One must invoke Him spontaneously, selflessly and with no hope of gain. I have been trying to pray for several days but have not succeeded. No rituals are needed. I will find peace if I simply offer Him my devotion. It does not matter what I call Him or how I invoke

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Him. I pray : 'Oh merciful God, let me glimpse You within me. I do not ask anything for myself. Only give me a place at Your feet. Lift me up and take me in Your fold; give me the strength and the yearning to invoke You. I have sinned a lot and have often taken recourse to lies for the sake of momentary satisfaction. There is nothing that You do not know. Forgive me in Your infinite understanding and give me the inspiration not to be led astray again. Deliver me from vanity and my ego. Help me devote myself to the service of others and carry out Your will to the best of my ability for the rest of my life. It will not grieve me if You do not wish me to serve any particular purpose. I am not after fame and glory. Let me abide near You. Give me shelter at Your feet, take me to that unknown land and fill my mind with Your peace. You know whom I still love and care for. I do not claim anything from them. I just wish them the best. My mind yearns to see You but I am trying my best to restrain it.' I have realized the futility of this world. Here today, gone tomorrow—this is the process of life. Then why fuss over such trivial things ? We are only travellers in transit. What is the difference between us and beasts if we spend the little time we have on this earth, steeped in a mire of lust and greed. I have often observed the instinctual behaviour of animals. If men, who have a soul and can recognize God, forget everything and indulge in these base pursuits, what can be more tragic ?

'Oh God ! Kindle a new spirit within me. Give me the strength to invoke You.' This is my prayer. I retire for the night with this thought in my mind. 'Oh merciful, fill the hearts of men with love. Let hatred not sully my heart.' I know that my life will be snuffed out suddenly. This does not sadden me. But before that, I want to prepare my mind by surrendering it to God.

I have been unwell again for the last two days. For eight days I was well and did not feel any sort of pain. Yesterday morning, there was slight pain but it did not last long. It recurred in the evening. I was fine enough today. It was in the evening, when I was sitting in bed writing letters, that the pain started. It lasted for five minutes and was quite intolerable for some time. I could not breathe. I do not know why this happens. Is it that the gas

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accumulated in the stomach exerts a pressure on the heart ? I am quite careful about my diet. I do not eat much and I take medicines to digest whatever I eat. If my condition remains like this despite the precautions, how can I lead a normal life ? One day, this pain could be fatal and my heart may stop beating. Thus will my life end. It is quite natural that I should want those whom I love dearly to be near me. The one person whose presence would calm my mind, dissolve my worries and ease my pain at the time of illness, is far away. This, too, is a test. Maybe I will have to suffer alone. Perhaps that is what God is gradually preparing me for. I must not hanker for what I do not have. Nor should I expect it. It is possible that I might not get to enjoy even what I have; but I will have to carry on somehow. I feel sorry for my mother. She is old and is all alone here with me. Whenever I tell her that I am a little unwell she gets so worried that I feel very unhappy. She too has no peace of mind.

I am feeling tired today. I want to write about a lot of things but my capacity to write is limited. I heard about the sudden death of Sarat Basak. Last Sunday, on his way back from Kalimpong, he suddenly fell ill after leaving Siliguri. He died before the train could reach Jalpaiguri. His wife and two young sons were with him. This kind of death is a blessing for the person who is dying. Of course, his wife must have suffered terribly. Such is life! A person who was hale and hearty went to the hills for his winter vacation and suddenly on his way back breathed his last ! He was widely travelled, had many friends, and kept himself busy till the very last. He was not involved in any major national activities. Perhaps he did not wish to ; or maybe he did not have the time. This is life ! His memory will gradually fade. Take the case of S.N. Banerjee. He would be greatly missed if he was absent from court for even one day. The High Court and his clients would be at a loss. He died about two years ago, but how many people even think of him now or miss his presence ?

I must get down to write about the events of the last two months today. The sooner I finish writing about this chapter of my life, the better.

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I have written about Mehr Chand Khanna. Another such person was Maheswar Dayal Seth, who was the chairman of the Awadh Assembly. He had a great regard for me. He was the General Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha for a year during which he managed to acquire considerable influence. He had been in two minds for some time. He often said that he would like to join the Congress. He told me, when I had visited him in Lucknow in 1944, that Savarkar was against him and that though he wanted to serve the Hindu Mahasabha, he was not getting the opportunity to do so. Despite opposition from the Savarkar group, I gave him a break in 1945 when I was the President of the party. I co-opted him in the all-India working committee of the Sabha. Mahanta Digbijoy Nath of Gorakhpur, U.P., was a fearless and compassionate Hindu leader. He was fully in support of Maheswar Dayal. To get back to the point, no constructive work was done by the Awadh unit of the Sabha in the previous year. Supporters blamed Maheswar Dayal for it. He did not achieve anything, despite the fact that he faced no obstacles. He maintained that it would be unwise to quarrel with the Congress and that we would be defeated if we did so. Initially, he raised many objections against contesting the elections, but when he was told that he was free to join the Congress, he said that he would work dedicatedly for the Sabha. During the Puja holidays, Nirmal accompanied him on a tour of some parts of U.P. and said that Maheswar Dayal had really tried his utmost to strengthen the party. However, when a provincial president is so undecided, it not only weakens the party in that province, but damages its image all over India.

I cannot write any more today. I am feeling ill again. I do not know how long it will take me to get well. I cannot bear to carry on like this any more.

10 January, 1946, 7.00 p.m.

Yesterday, I had to stop writing. The pain in my heart was very slight but suddenly I started shivering. This sort of thing has never happened before. I wrapped myself in a sheet and sat in the easy chair but I could not bear it any more and went to bed. I

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covered myself with sheets, blankets and a quilt. I wore woollen socks and took a hot water bag, but nothing helped. I called Dr Mazumdar and he diagnosed these symptoms as malaria. I have never before had malaria in spite of having travelled so much.

There was no respite until 10.00 p.m. I did not feel like removing the blankets and the quilt. The fever subsided at around midnight, but I had a headache and my body ached all over throughout the night. I could not sleep till early morning. The doctor said that perhaps it had been caused by the high dose of Vitamin B injection.

I was feeling very weak this morning. My head felt very heavy but I did not have fever. My appetite was poor. I lay in bed the whole day. The doctor came to see me twice. Yesterday, my pulse rate had gone up to eighty-five, but today it had come down to sixty-four. Now I am sitting at the table. The room is dark though there is moonlight outside. It is warmer today. I am quite comfortable today, but who knows how much longer I will have to suffer? Who knows what more lies in store for me?

Jogesh Babu came over in the evening. Haridas Mazumdar had visited me in the morning. I received some English and Bengali books from Calcutta today. There has been no letter from *Boudi* today. I don't think she will come here. It will inconvenience many out there if she does. I only think of my comfort, which is a sign of selfishness. But I did not think in this vein today. So many thoughts occurred to me when I was sick yesterday. *Ma* is in a sorry plight. She did not want to go back to her room last night but decided to lie on the floor in my room. I did not agree to it. She worries all the more because she is all alone here. I got a letter from Nishit today. If Bua comes to Asansol on Saturday, Santu will bring her to Madhupur on Sunday. But his old servant has not come back and his nephew has also gone to Calcutta. If Bua comes here, he will have a difficult time, so I have sent him a telegram telling him that he should not bring her here in a hurry. I would love to have her here, but I do not want others to be inconvenienced for my sake. I do not know what they will decide finally.

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Let me get back to my account of the past two months. I have written about U.P. There was trouble brewing in Bihar, too. There was no leader there who could manage things efficiently. Roy Saheb Arora was a good man, but he was not the sort who could fight his way through. He left on some pretext. Dr Tripathi, the secretary, talked big but did not seem to be very able. He defected to the Congress without intimating anybody. Kumar Sadananda Singh was promising but being a secretary of the Maharaja of Darbhanga he was so involved in its affairs, that I did not think him capable of helping in building a great national organization. However, he was a genuine person and did not indulge in lies and falsehood. The Congress was quite powerful in Bihar and since there was no unity within our party there, I did not expect much from that province.

We hardly had any influence in Assam and our position was even worse in Orissa. Reddy, the president of the Andhra Pradesh unit, had invited me there the previous year and received me with much fanfare. He seemed to have disappeared and did not even reply to my letters. In Madras, Panchanathan was a very good man, but he was not able to do much. The entire organization in Tamil Nadu seemed to be full of shirkers. Nobody trusted Dr Naidu, who then joined the Congress. The Berar unit in C.P. made some progress, but not much was achieved in Mahakosala, and the Jabalpur unit was plagued by dissension.

Maharashtra had some able men and some fruitful work had been done there. In Poona, especially, there were some followers of Tilak who were Hindu-oriented and had inspired a lot of young men. I felt happy and proud to see the organization in Poona. Jayanta, the grandson of Tilak, would probably become a well-known figure one day. Dhamdhere was a trusted hand in Bombay, but had limited ability. Raja Narayan Bansilal was quite a fervent Hindu, but lacked the ability to build a big organization by himself. In Poona and Bombay, there were quite a few people who did not fully approve of Savarkar. They were supporters of the Hindu Mahasabha but did not subscribe to the views of Savarkar. There was another group that had created the

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myth of Savarkarism. Savarkar himself did not travel much. He was not willing to do much about the elections either. Gujarat was like bundle of dynamite. It could explode any day, but the explosion would only intensify the dissent and disharmony within the party. In Sind, Bhojraj Ajwani made a lot of promises but I did not know how much he could achieve. However, there were some people in Sind who were true supporters of the Hindu Mahasabha.

This was then the all-India picture. After being released, the Congress leaders took a few positive steps which removed any doubts that the Hindus had had. Leaders like Jawaharlal and Patel completely identified themselves with the events of 1942. Unlike Gandhiji, they did not raise the question whether the people were in favour of non-violence or whether they advocated violence. The defenceless common people had not revolted thus for independence since the Sepoy Mutiny. The leaders extolled the people for their heroism and sacrifice and sympathized with their trials and tribulations. This approach evoked a new response among the masses. They protested vociferously against Pakistan and the Muslim League. The strong terms they used—especially Patel and Nehru—to criticize Jinnah and the League made many feel that the Congress had really abandoned its policy of pampering the Muslims and giving indulgence to Jinnah. But although they proclaimed that they were against the formation of Pakistan, they were in reality evading the decision regarding the partition of the country under the garb of self-determination. The Press not only refrained from bringing this inconsistency into the open, it also tried to misinform the people in many ways. The people of the country, particularly the Hindus, who had become almost obsessed with the idea of gaining independence, failed to analyze this issue in depth. Since the Congress leaders repeatedly proclaimed that there would be no compromise on Pakistan, the people felt that the Congress had accepted the tenets of the Hindu Mahasabha, and so did not see any need for a separate existence of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Then came the trial of the men of the Azad Hind Fauj. I do not know how the government committed such a blunder. Stories

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about the I.N.A. spread like wildfire across the length and breadth of India. In a speech at Lahore, Nehru had said that if Subhas Boose came to attack India with the help of the Japanese army, he would resist them even if he had to do it alone. But when the Congress leaders realized how Subhas and the Azad Hind Fauj had inspired the people, they shifted their stand. Nehru changed his tune immediately. Subhas was not the founder of the Azad Hind Fauj. Before Subhas went to Japan, some Indian soldiers had dreamt of organizing themselves and freeing India with the help of the Japanese. But they had no great leader amongst them. Subhas filled this vacuum with considerable help from Rashbehari Basu. Subhas's plan was undoubtedly a great and noble one. Within a short period, he had succeeded in uniting Indian soldiers, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, and had inspired them with the idea, that with proper military training, they could win freedom for their motherland. Rarely before in history had such a call (*Jai Hind*) for self-sacrifice at the altar of the motherland been given. That their efforts did not succeed was a tragedy. But they also made it manifest that if India was to win independence, it could be possible only through the path of military resistance, and that she would have to depend on her military might to preserve her independence. The spinning wheel could clothe the people or even uplift them economically, but it could not be made the means for achieving independence in this era.

The Congress, under the leadership of Gandhiji, did not believe in military revolt. They had also not been in favour of military training during World War II. If the people had heeded the appeal of the Congress then, nobody would have joined the Indian Army. The Hindu Mahasabha preached just the opposite. It admitted that the people were being pressed to fight that war and that till India was independent, it was irrelevant to debate over the causes of the war. We proclaimed that the need of the hour, for the Indians, especially the Hindus, was to gain military expertise on land, sea and air. I said over and over again at public meetings that the British were providing us with military training for their own convenience and that while we

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might have to fight for them then, a day would certainly come when those who were being trained would be able to use the same training to drive out the British. And Subhas proved this to be true. If the people of the country had accepted the views of the Congress, they would not have joined the British Indian Army and Subhas would not have been able to garner the manpower and ammunition to build his great Azad Hind Fauj.

Yet the Congress was able to unleash a flood of emotions regarding the achievements of the Azad Hind Fauj and the I.N.A. trial. The people failed to understand that it was not possible to hail both Gandhiji and Subhas at the same time. There was a wide chasm between the ideologies of the two. The Congress took undue advantage of the situation and played upon the emotions of the people in order to win the elections.

The other factors in favour of the Congress were the number of their innumerable workers, and the support of the Press. The thousands of Congress supporters who had been jailed were released, and they returned with a redoubled will to make the Congress victorious. The Press is always tilted in favour of the winning side. It is not really concerned with right or wrong. What the British could not achieve under the Defence of India Rules, the Press managed by stifling the opposition, distorting its views and building up public opinion. Two outstanding examples of a biased Press were the *Hindustan Standard* and the *Anando Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta. Our work was hampered without the help of such publicity.

Factions began to appear within our own party. Those who had stood against the Congress were swept away. Some persons, who had contested as Hindu Mahasabha candidates for their own interest, thought it wise to ditch the party. Some members deserted the party without any notice. Some were bought off. In all, there was a lack of confidence all around. Victory or defeat is not the most important thing in life. If there are two parties, both cannot win. Truth, and the amount of faith one has in that truth is what matters. The Congress did not field any candidate from the Muslim centres, barring a few cases. The constituencies where the Muslims won with the Congress ticket, were in fact

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joint electorates with a majority of voters being Hindus. Nationalist Muslims and other anti-League Muslims contested the elections. The Congress did not hesitate to extend its co-operation openly to such persons. But the party thought it impossible to ally itself with nationalist Hindus who were not in the Congress. It would have been a different matter if the Congress could have defeated the League and thus proved that it had some influence over the Muslims. But it suffered defeat not only at the hands of the Muslims, but also the Sikhs. It depended on Hindu support to enter the Council, and yet it was unwilling to protect Hindu rights, or project itself as the representative of the Hindus. What could be more unfortunate for the Hindus ? The British-Muslim combination had conspired to weaken the political strength of the Hindus. But the Hindus did not want to build an organization of their own. They took pleasure in destroying the organization that we had tried to build against all odds. What could be more suicidal than this ? What could be the future of a community which was blindly edging towards its own ruin ; which took no pride in itself and fought shy of building a Hindu nation for fear of being dubbed communal ?

What is the point in blaming only the British and the Muslims ? The lure of trade and commerce brought the British to this country. The lust for money gradually turned into a thirst for power. Why would they want to give up such an empire ? The Muslims ruled over the Hindus for seven hundred years and during this period, their treatment was sometimes just, and sometimes cruel. Though many of the Muslims were Hindu converts, they now disliked the Hindus. They dared to dream of a Muslim rule again. As long as the British were supreme here, both the Muslims and Hindus would have to serve them. Both the Hindus and Muslims were naturally concerned about who would emerge as more powerful once the British left. The Muslims were determined not to become the underdogs. There could be no dispute if both groups worked unitedly to preserve the Indian culture and live amicably according to their respective beliefs. But the Hindus did not worry about how they would protect themselves if the Muslims became overzealous and

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attempted to dominate them. In that event, the Hindu-Muslim problem would never be solved without a civil war. We did not want a civil war, but if the other party kept itself in readiness and we were caught off-guard, then we would be the losers.

The Congress had failed to solve the Hindu-Muslim problem, nor would it ever be able to do so. The problem could be solved either by a mutual understanding, a friendly reunion, or a trial of strength. If there was no compromise, the more powerful party would emerge victor. How could an organization which was built on Hindu support, yet considered it a sin to uphold Hindu interests, fight another organization which was dedicated to establishing Muslim dominance? What could be more tragic than the fact that the Hindus failed to understand this simple truth despite their intellectual and financial resources? Islam had a singular spirit of unity and equality that Hinduism lacked. Differences along lines of caste, creed or religion kept one Hindu from empathizing with another. On the other hand, one Muslim invariably felt a bond with another, irrespective of where he was from, whether it was from another part of India or another part of the world.

Until the Hindus of India realized that they were one, they would not be able to establish a Hindu state, gain sway, or build a nation. The great spirit of Hinduism could not flourish unless we effected a social and economic revolution. This was the stupendous task facing the Hindu Mahasabha, and it needed great resources to accomplish it. A Hindu awakening would not be possible without long years of labour, the spread of education, a struggle against social corruption and narrow-mindedness, and the establishment of a religion based on equality. The Hindus would not be able to survive if they were preoccupied with individual advancement—materialistic or spiritual. We had to invigorate ourselves, build a nation; if necessary, wrest our rights from others. This was the spirit that had infused the Muslim society. What was the point in belittling them? We could learn a lot from their desire to arise as a new nation. But how many Hindus realized that?

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I have digressed somewhat from the main theme. The elections started in the midst of all this. The Hindu Mahasabha was more powerful in Bengal than elsewhere, so everyone expected it to fare better there. But events took a different turn. We were like a rudderless boat in a storm. It was difficult to maintain our composure.

Deben Babu did not put in much effort from the very beginning. He was too busy handling his duties as Mayor and was not really interested in concentrating on election work. Initially, Sanat Babu was to stand from the Calcutta suburbs. It would not seem right for me to contest Sarat Bose from Calcutta, so it was decided that I would stand from the Calcutta suburbs and Sanat Babu would stand from Calcutta proper. Sanat Babu heartily welcomed this idea. But after the decision was taken, he suddenly changed his mind. He wanted to withdraw from the contest due to pressure from his family. I tried to dissuade him and he postponed taking a decision. But ultimately, he confessed that he did not want to run against Sarat Bose. His health also deteriorated. Finally, he withdrew from the contest. Deben Babu was in a more embarrassing position. All his centres demanded explanations as to why he was not working for the elections but he did not respond.

The maximum problems arose regarding my contest. My constituency comprised of forty-four municipalities and an electorate of 36,000 spread over the districts of 24 Parganas, Hoogly and Howrah. I had been told that it would be easy to handle this centre. I had no idea that Howrah would create such problems. There were 8000 voters in Howrah alone. The Congress had a particular stronghold here. There was a lot of scope for rigging in this area. The Hindu Mahasabha was not really strong in any part of my constituency. Anyway, the work began. The *Ananda Bazar Patrika* and the *Hindustan Standard* continued spreading false propaganda and canards against me. Such things are bound to happen during elections. Even so, there is a limit to false propaganda, and the two newspapers exceeded this limit. They started spreading rumours, such as : I was a traitor and had vested interests ; that the Hindu Mahasabha

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could do nothing good for Bengal since, like the League, it was also an enemy of the country; that during the struggle of 1942, the Hindu Mahasabha had helped the government, and so forth. Personal animosity against me came to the forefront. My opponent, the Hoogly Congress leader, Nagendranath Mukhopadhyaya, was contesting against me. The Congress started proclaiming that it did not matter who the better candidate was, but in order to maintain the predominance of the Congress as an organization, Syama Prasad should be defeated at all costs. I did not expect any reward for what I had done for the Hindus and for Bengal during the last six years. Nobody appreciated the worth of what I had done. Their main objective was to annihilate me; that was the central issue! Sarat Babu even said that this was the 'Key Fight' of India. What logic! What intelligence! The Congress did not have the courage or capacity to put up a candidate against Jinnah. And that very Congress, the prestige of whose leaders I had tried my utmost to uphold over the last three or four years, were now going all out to defeat me.

Initially, I did not canvass much in my own constituency, but my supporters did. Later, I went touring and received quite a good response. Many came forward to support me; not all of them were members of the Hindu Mahasabha, but, on a personal level, they wished my political success. Others kept aloof. I do not want to name them here. I have done a lot for many people without any thought of self-interest. Now that the Congress was opposing me on a party basis, even those who had risen to prominence with my assistance did not hesitate to oppose me. I could not find much support for the Hindu Mahasabha. But as an individual — because of my contribution to society — I did get some support. Those who were comparatively elderly and understood the problems of Bengal were surprised at the hostility of the Congress towards me. The younger, new enthusiasts, who fervently supported the Congress, were dead against me.

Two large meetings were held in Calcutta. One of them raised the issue of the I.N.A. I spoke on the contradictions between the ideals of the I.N.A., and the Congress' stand on non-violence. Everyone lauded my speech. The election meeting was attended

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by about forty to fifty thousand people. I expressed my views, taking care to steer clear of personal accusations. I spoke about how those, who had joined the Congress out of opportunism and who were deriding me for being a traitor, had in 1942, either made themselves scarce or had managed to get released from jail by signing bonds. I told the people that both both Sarat Babu and I could work for the country simultaneously. If Bengal had no need for me and the Hindus did not need my services any longer, I could divert my energies in some other direction. I did not believe that I was indispensable for the country. I had rendered whatever I was capable of and I had done it selflessly and willingly without expectations of any reward. If my services were no longer required, why should I despair? I would gracefully accept it because there was not an iota of self-interest in whatever I did. I got a big applause for my speech.

The election campaign began to gather momentum. One morning, I went to Howrah and made arrangements to open an office of the Sabha there, but I did not like its atmosphere of work. Many supporters told me that the people of Howrah could not be relied upon ; that they often did quite the opposite of what they said. Even then, I found there were many people who sincerely wanted to work for me. I went to Behala and Kidderpore, where work was going on quite well. One day, on the way to Hooghly and Bansberia, I stopped over at many places. It seemed that the election work was proceeding quite smoothly. My presence seemed to inspire greater enthusiasm among the workers. A fairly large meeting was held at Bansberia and a massive one at Hooghly. A group of young men with Congress flags came to the meeting to create some trouble. The meeting was disrupted for a while. I rose to make a speech and spoke emphatically. This worked, and the mood changed for the better. The work progressed satisfactorily all round. But I observed two things. Firstly, the warm reception that I got stemmed from a personal regard for me; and secondly, the work suffered if I did not intervene personally to speed it up. The consequences of this soon became evident as events unfolded.

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On 22nd November, I set off early for a trip to Barasat, Basirhat, Taki and Baduria with Deben Babu (Mayor). Kucho, who was in Barasat, had specially called over his acquaintances to meet me. Butun behaved most queerly. I had always helped him out in the past, but now that he had a good job and did not need my help, he was not interested in my election. I felt that I should not seek help from a person who seemed so reluctant. He was at home the day I reached Barasat. He did not even come downstairs to meet me. I had never expected this. Anyhow, many people turned up and the general response was very good. In Taki, a few people raised slogans against me and in favour of the Congress. After attending a few important meetings, I returned home at about 9.00 p.m., very tired.

I heard that there had been a lot of violence in Calcutta and that the police had opened fire. People had been looking for me since late afternoon. Some youths had held meetings and had taken out a procession. The police had stopped the procession while it was passing through Dharamtalla Street. It had been planned that the procession would pass through Lalbazar and Dalhousie Square. The police had prevented them claiming that it was a prohibited area, but the processionists not having known about this earlier, refused to obey. This is how the disturbance started. *Lathicharge* and firing followed, resulting in the death of a few, and injuring many. All kinds of stories started circulating, but nobody knew exactly what had happened. I rang up Dr Radhabinod Pal and told him that we should be present at the scene of the disturbance and stand beside the students in their moment of crisis. He in turn informed Dr Bidhan Roy.

I went to Dr Pal's house at about 9.30 p.m. I did not even get time to wash up after a whole day of strenuous work and running around. I hardly had any energy left to move. I heard that Dr Pal had gone over to Bidhan Babu's house. I went to the Medical College. The gate was blocked by a crowd of people, who made way to let me in. When I went in, I saw that there was quite a commotion. There were all sorts of rumours floating around. I went to meet Principal Lindon, but he had already left for his quarters. However, he came down immediately to meet me. He

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had nothing much to say, and assured me that everything possible was being done to treat the injured. The relatives of the injured were not allowed inside, and there was no way of their getting news about the injured. When I conveyed this to the Principal, he said that it was the police who were not allowing the relatives to enter the hospital, although he personally had no objection to their coming in. It was then decided that arrangements would be made for the names of the dead and wounded to be announced from the gate.

At that moment Dr Pal and Dr Roy arrived. We took them along to make a telephone call to the Government House. Our objective was to inform them of what had happened, and to ask them to take measures against the possibility of a recurrence of such sort of trouble. Dr Roy spoke to Mr Tyson. I then came to know that the situation at Dharamtalla Street was still quite grave. Thousands of students were squatting on the road and barricading them was the police, with lathis and arms in hand. Everyone requested us to go there. Bidhan Babu had to go home to attend a serious patient. Dr Pal and I went to Dharamtalla Street. Our car was stopped by the police when we reached the crossing, but on recognizing us, they let us go. When we neared Wachal Mollah's shop, we saw a fully armed possé of policemen. The students were squatting on the road facing them and shouting slogans. We neard that the Governor was there. When he got to know that we had arrived, he came up and requested us to tell the boys to go back home. I went up to the boys, who started shouting even louder. They said that since the evening they had been telling the police to inform Sarat Bose and me about the situation.

Sarat Bose had refused to come. He had sent a written message deploring their behaviour and asking them to go home like good boys. He said he had not come to their rescue, because those who had incited them to create trouble had done it to put him in a spot. I did not say anything openly but was amazed that he could have taken recourse to such a political ruse. He had often called upon the boys to face bullets, had roused them with stirring speeches, and when they had actually gone out to face the

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bullets, standing their ground despite the shots, he sent a message telling them that they had done wrong and should go back home. What a peculiar sense of responsibility ! Anyway, that was not the time to consider whether the boys were right or wrong. It was the duty of those who claimed to be leaders to stand by the boys in their hour of danger.

I spoke to Bina Das. I got to know that Sarat Babu's message had been ripped to pieces by the boys. I saw the scraps of paper in the possession of Sushil, the *Jugantar* reporter. Mrs Jyotirmayee Ganguli arrived and I spoke to her too. She was extremely upset by Sarat Babu's conduct. She had gone to his place to bring him over to the site of trouble. She saw the great leader sitting there, surrounded by sycophants. They said they could not allow him to step out in such dangerous circumstances. Sarat Babu was the only leader in Bengal and if he went there, he might be hit by a bullet or knocked down by a blow on the head. How could Sarat Babu go there in the face of such grave peril, etc. This exploded the myth of Sarat Babu's dedicated leadership and exposed his hypocrisy. The difference between Subhas and Sarat Bose was glaring. Sarat Babu sent Kiron Sankar Roy to the spot, but he could do nothing to control the situation.

The boys refused to budge. They were determined at any cost to follow the route they had already decided upon. They were not willing to let down their comrades who had willingly sacrificed their lives for the cause. They were determined to go ahead. They calmly assured me that they did not intend to indulge in violence and create trouble. I suggested that if we could proceed a little further into the prohibited area, we could hold the meeting at Curzon Park and then disperse. I requested Mr Casey and Mr Ray, the Police Commissioner, to allow the boys to proceed according to their wish. I assured them that there would be no trouble. But they stood their ground. It had become a prestige issue and they would not budge, even if it meant loss of life. Thus the tussle between the police and the demonstrators continued. There were some policemen who seemed to be waiting for the Governor to leave so that they could get an opportunity to crush the unarmed crowd with brute force. The boys and some

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policemen requested me not to leave as they thought my presence would at least prevent further loss of lives. Mrs Jyotirmayee Ganguly was restlessly pacing up and down. She, too, expressed the same view—who knew then that she would be killed the very next day.

After some time, Suresh Mazumdar and a few other Congressmen arrived. By then, the news had spread that I was there on the spot. I had no political motive. I had only wanted that we should save the boys, irrespective of party affiliations. With this in mind, I tried several times to phone Sarat Babu from the cinema hall. But there was no response. I was there till 3.00 a.m. I returned home only after pacifying the boys, reassuring them, and also ensuring that no more trouble would take place. I was very tired and it took me an effort to even get out of the car. Dr Pal had been waiting for me, sitting in the car, or pacing up and down the road. He did not want to leave me alone.

It is 8.30 p.m. now and I will stop here for today. I haven't received any letter from *Boudi* for the second day. I wonder why she has not written. There is no news of her coming over. I do not think about myself any more. I have spent several days here and I don't know for how long things will continue like this.

I am feeling a little better today, but as yet I don't have much strength. So many thoughts cross my mind but it is not possible for me to put all of them down. For the last few days I have been praying frequently. It helps me get some peace of mind. But I want strength to be able to pray more fervently, to pray without any thought for myself and only with the goal of devoting myself to Him wholeheartedly. With this prayer I end today's entry. Perhaps, who knows ! one such night after having finished writing like this, I will sleep and not wake up to see the next morning. This does not sadden me at all, but it would be my greatest attainment if I would be able to devote myself solely to Him before I die. Will I be so fortunate ?

Sunday, 13 January, 1946, 9.00 p.m.

I could not write much yesterday. I may not be able to write

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much today either because Dr Mazumdar will be coming over to collect a blood sample and he has asked me to sit in a dark room for half an hour before 10.00 p.m.

My eldest brother arrived here last evening. Santu boarded the same train at Asansol. Satish Babu also reached here at the same time, from Jhajha. I had known that Santu would come here yesterday.

For some nights, I have been praying, pouring forth my soul, my eyes filled with tears : 'Give me shelter. If You want to take me, take me today itself. I will not even feel a twinge of remorse. I will gladly extinguish the lamp of my life. But if You want me to stay on for some time more, give me peace ; allow me to regain my faith in You ; let me believe that You are mine, that You are the refuge of the homeless, the king of the beggars, the friend of the friendless ; You are the beacon light of the lost traveller ; the vision of the blind ; wisdom for the ignorant and the friend of the poor.' These thoughts fill me with joy. But it is not always possible for me to be able to restrain my mind and to derive strength from my faith in Him. Worries come flooding back ; turbulent emotions rack my heart and I wonder why I feel such despair. That is why my prayer tonight is : 'Oh merciful, come and make me Your own, show me the way and enlighten me ; let me realize that there is no peace greater than that of being immersed in You ; I do not want to harbour any anger or bitterness towards anyone ; whatever I've received from anyone in this life has filled me with gratitude. If the persons who could have given me some solace are not here, beside me at this moment, I don't bear any grudge towards them. May God bless everyone.' These thoughts fill my heart to the brim.

Monday, 14 January, 1946, 8.00 p.m.

I have been slightly better these last two days. I went out for a walk in the morning and in the evening too. My appetite has improved somewhat. The doctor sends me porridge every morning. A multi-course midday meal is sent to me from Jogesh

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Babu's house. Sweets are sent from Jnanbabu's residence. Every alternate day, I go to the doctor's house for dinner. Besides all this there is of course food cooked in our house. I received two letters from *Boudi* today which were written on last Wednesday and Friday. She has written categorically that she will not be able to come. Hasu and Antu write to me every day. I know that they are very worried about me. I feel more worried about Antu. He is intelligent but is not interested in studying regularly. The news of my illness has been reported in the newspapers that arrived from Calcutta today. I wish they had not reported it. I have been passing the days somehow. I have still not decided how I will spend my time when I return to Calcutta. I cannot bear this indecisiveness any longer. I do not know how long I am going to live. I must take up such activity that will benefit others and at the same time be after my own heart. Till today, I have never tried to save money and this does worry me. Before I return I will have to make up my mind about what I should take up.

Let me try to complete my account of the last two months. On the day of the firing in Calcutta, I returned from Dharamtalla at 3.00 a.m. The next morning, at 10 o'clock, I went to the University to talk to Dr Pal to ensure that schools and colleges remained closed for a few days. I feared that there might be more trouble if this was not done. After that I went to the Medical College Hospital. I met all the injured and inquired after their welfare. The college and hospital compound was filled with people. Everyone was desperately trying to enter the hospital. The doctors asked us to request the crowd not to try to meet the injured. It would be difficult to manage such a crowd and it would also disturb the patients. The people quietened down when this was explained to them. One gentleman came forward. His nephew, Rameswar Banerjee, was among the first to be shot dead. The police had still not handed over his body to his relatives. I went to the University with the gentleman and two of his companions. We walked the distance. There was a milling crowd all around. It was as if a dam had burst into the area. I saw a group of students from Presidency College approaching us.

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I got to know that the boys from Dharamtalla Street had left via Bentinck Street early in the morning. I telephoned the police from the University. Haridas Babu and Haricharan arrived, and I sent them to the police station.

By the time I returned home and had lunch it was 1.00 p.m. There was no time to relax. I had heard that thousands of boys and girls had assembled at Wellington Square. Then came the news that they were taking the same route that they had taken through Dharamtalla Street the day before. After a while, there was news that the police had stopped the crowd and the situation was similar to that of the previous day, before the firing had taken place. The Corporation office sent a message that it was imperative for me to go there immediately as the situation had worsened. When I asked about Sarat Babu, I was told that he could not be contacted and was perhaps busy arguing a case in court. Later, I heard that he had already been to Wellington Square and had tried to talk to the students, but they were very agitated due to the fact that he had let them down the day before and would not listen to him.

I got ready to go to Dharamtalla Street. Haricharan returned from the police station with the release certificate for the handing over of Rameswar Banerjee's body. Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar and Meera Dutta Gupta drove down to my house with Rameswar's parents. The unfortunate parents had set out for the morgue to have a glimpse of their dead son. I went out to where their car was parked. I was surprised at their equanimity, especially the mother's. They seemed to have accepted this sudden blow with great courage. They did not want to sully with tears, the sacrifice of their son, who had fallen to the bullet of an Englishman for the sake of his country. I gave the release certificate to Meera. Niharendu accompanied me to Dharamtalla.

The situation there was fraught with danger. Over a lac of people had assembled, determined to proceed to the prohibited area. In the middle of the road stood the Police Commissioner and other officers. The police seemed to be in battle-preparedness, eager for a trial of strength with unarmed people. I

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spotted Nalinakshya and a few other Congress members. Sarat Babu had asked the boys to return to Wellington Square, but they had refused to do so, even if that meant losing their lives. They were not in the least afraid of the Police Commissioner's threats. He requested me to stand on top of the police lorry and reason with them. Once atop the truck, I could see a vast sea of angry people. I asked the Police Commissioner to come up and pointing to the scene before us, told him, 'Let them go the way they wish to. You can't stop them without machine guns, and then thousands of them will unhesitatingly sacrifice their lives. The casualties will be greater than at Jallianwalla Bagh and they still won't move. On the other hand, if they are allowed to proceed peacefully, I will ask them to accompany me to Keoratala to cremate the body of Rameswar.' The Police Commissioner got off the lorry to think it over. By then, the enraged boys had already started to proceed. My truck was in the midst of them. I wonder why the police had not opened fire then. If they had, they would have had to fire over my head. The Commissioner had managed to keep his cool and did not resort to firing.

Later, the rumour was spread that it was Sarat Babu who had phoned the Governor's secretary, and that it was he who had made arrangements for the boys to be allowed to proceed. That very morning, Sarat Babu had made a derisive reference to my incidental meeting with the Governor the night before, and to the fact that *The Statesman* had carried my picture. He had sarcastically made a statement that he was not as keen as me to shake hands with the Governor. Now, it is worth noting that this very upright leader later professed to having telephoned the Governor's secretary in order to make a request ! Anyway, I did not wish to take any credit for what had happened. The boys were jubilant about the fact that they were able to uphold the cause for which their comrades had laid down their lives.

I proceeded to the morgue from there. Azizul Haque, the coroner, was very helpful. I arranged for Rameshwar's parents to see their beloved son's body. Even I could not bear to see that grotesque, naked body. I arranged for the body to be clothed

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before the parents could see it. The parents saw the body of their dear son, but they did not break down. What remarkable forbearance ! The next hurdle was to take the body to the burning ground. At first, it was decided to carry it in a lorry which the police had provided. But nobody was in favour of this. I arranged for a large wooden bedstead. The boys carried this on their shoulders. My car was fitted with a loudspeaker, which came in very handy. Pochu stood on the footboard of the car. Speaking over the loudspeaker, he managed to control the crowd. In this manner, we proceeded to the burning ground. Groups of boys joined us as we rounded Dalhousie Square. After forming a cordon we went ahead with the procession. About two to three lacs people followed but there was no slogan-shouting or unruly behaviour. They proceeded in silence as a mark of respect for the departed.

I walked the whole way. The boys insisted that the procession should proceed via Dharamtalla towards Chowringhee. Though no route had been fixed, I had earlier told the police that we would not go through Chowringhee. But I could not disregard the wishes of the boys. There was no trouble, and everything went off peacefully. There was a mammoth crowd all along the way. People looked on from every window and balcony, showering flowers and *khai*. It was an unforgettable sight.

Meanwhile, there had been quite a commotion going on in the southern part of the city since evening. A general strike had been called that day. The Hindus and Muslims had joined hands and thousands of Muslims joined our procession. Several Muslims were relatives of those who had been killed in the previous day's firing. The solidarity of the people was remarkable. Anyway, to come back to the point, there was a strike in south Calcutta. Cars were not being allowed on the road. They tried to stop my car twice, but on seeing me, they let us proceed. Cars bearing the Hindu Mahasabha and Congress flags were not being stopped. The flags of all parties could be seen in the procession. I had intentionally arranged it that way—we should demonstrate for at least a day that our flags could fly together and we could all work unitedly for a great cause.

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In south Calcutta, a military lorry ran over a boy. The enraged crowd stopped the lorry, set it on fire, and threw the Black American driver into the burning lorry. Then the arson started. Vehicles were set on fire. The army personnel left their vehicles without demur when they were told to do so. But the police started firing indiscriminately, killing and injuring many people. I came to hear of all this only on the way. Because of this I had to proceed on foot. I felt that it was my duty to remain with the procession and not to turn my back on them. As we neared the Calcutta Club, I saw fires blazing in the distance and heard that lorries were being burnt. I diverted the procession through Harish Mukherjee Road. There I witnessed a similar scene. Rameswar's house was near Kalighat, on Harish Mukherjee Road. We managed to somehow reach Keoratala through all the arson. I could hardly walk by then. I had blisters on my feet. The last two days had been very strenuous and had left me totally exhausted.

Everyone assembled at the *burning ghat*. After asking them to make the necessary arrangements, I sat down on the steps of the *ghat*. The events of the past few days flashed through my mind. Many people had turned up but Sarat Babu had not. He came late at night. I went home at about 11.00 p.m., after the pyre had been lit. On the way back, I called on a gentleman who had lost his only son in the police firing near Hazra Park. The mother was sitting with her son's body on her lap. The father was pacing about in a stupor. There, too, I witnessed that strange forbearance. No one cried openly or showed his grief. 'My son has sacrificed his life to the British. Let him stay in my arms for the night. You can take him away in the morning.' These were the words of an uneducated, ordinary, middle-class mother! This brought home to me the heightened awareness among the people and I realized that a revolution was brewing. If such a fearless consciousness could be disciplined and channelized in the right direction how longer could the British remain? I received a message a little later that Mrs Jyotirmayee Ganguly, who had been with me till 3.00 a.m. on the previous day, had met with an accident. Her car had collided with a military lorry and the

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driver had died on the spot. She was critically injured, and died in hospital soon after. When I heard this, everything started to seem so bizarre. Life was so transient ! The lathis, bullets, cars and lorries all seemed to be a part of a grand design of the Divine Hand. I returned home and went to bed, dead beat around midnight. I would have to go on a tour from Kanchrapara to Barrackpore by car the next day according to a prior arrangement.

It is almost 10.00 p.m. It is a moonlit night, very tranquil and quiet. This is the ideal hour to concentrate on one's work. But it is not possible for me to do so tonight because I am feeling tired.

Tuesday, 15 January, 1946

I did not sleep well after returning from the cremation ground that day. All kinds of worries assailed my mind. The events of the last two days were still vivid in my mind. A pall of gloom descended on the city the next morning. The previous day's strike had been completely successful. Many trains had not plied as thousands of people had lain on the tracks, blocking them. There was an air of rebellion all around. In some places it had taken a violent turn. The rebellious spirit had broken all barriers. Trams and buses were kept off the roads. There was tension in the air. I left in a car with Sushil Chattopadhyaya, of Asutosh College, who was in charge of my campaign in the area between Barrackpore and Kanchrapara. Though I should have rested that day, I decided to go because the visit had been fixed and I thought that work would be disrupted if I did not go.

It was not easy to drive through the roads of Calcutta. Fires could still be seen here and there even though it was only morning. Trams and buses were not plying and it was hazardous to travel by car. We were stopped at several points but were allowed to proceed on being recognized. I was out the whole day, making speeches and holding discussions with many people. I received a warm welcome at Kanchrapara, Halisahar, Bhatpara, Naihati, Jaggatdal, Shyamnagar and Ichapur. The

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progress at Naihati was not too encouraging. The morning's editions of *Ananda Bazar* and *Hindustan Standard* made no mention of my role in the events of the past two days. Those who had been eye-witnesses to what I had done were appalled by this deception and shameless suppression of facts.

I had almost completed my campaigning for the elections. There was a huge meeting at Ichapur. Soon after that I started feeling ill. I suddenly felt very light and thought that I would fall. I felt so light that I was taken aback. Supporting myself on someone near me, I somehow steadied up. Some time later I felt a severe pain in the heart. I was in the car, on my way to Titagarh. The pain was excruciating, and I had never before experienced anything like it. I realized that the attack was severe this time. I was supposed to go to Rai Bahadur Taraknath Chatterjee's house, from where I was to proceed to a meeting. It was by then almost 9.00 p.m. and two to three thousand people were waiting for me. I somehow reached Mr Chatterjee's house, lay down and asked for a doctor. I was so unwell that I could hardly speak. I asked Sushil to ring up my house in Calcutta and convey the news without mentioning the seriousness of my condition. I told him to say that I would not be back home that night as I was not feeling well. Unable to ward off my eldest brother's probing questions, Sushil told him everything. There was quite a furore at home. Bidhan Babu was intimated about my illness and Indu Babu was also informed.

There was a big commotion in Calcutta. All kinds of stories were floating around and somebody had even rung up a newspaper office to confirm whether I was dead or alive. A doctor came over to treat me and he gave me some medicines. The pain subsided a little, but I was still very weak. At about eleven, my eldest brother arrived, together with Biju, Pochu, *Boudi* and Indu Babu. I decided not to spend the night away from home. We drove slowly and reached home at about one in the morning. I was feeling very ill and had never felt so weak before.

The next day, all the doctors who came told me that I should take complete rest if I wanted to survive at all. They said that if I heeded their advice I could still be saved. Otherwise, I might

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have to lead the life of a disabled person for as long as I survived. There was a great deal of arguing over what would be done about the elections. The doctors, especially Dr Roy, held that I should not do anything that would cause excitement and tension. The elections were scheduled to be held in early December. Elections or no elections, I would not be allowed to step out of the house for fifteen days. I had fallen ill on Saturday. Many meetings had been scheduled for Sunday at Uttarpara, Serampore, etc. I just could not attend them. Nirmal did not go either, because the week before, some Congress supporters had disrupted a meeting in Howrah and had insulted him. Deben Babu went to Serampore but did not face any trouble there. On hearing this, Nirmal went to Uttarpara. It was not possible for me to do much, sitting in the house. I still attempted to do some work, but suddenly I had a relapse.

The doctors were furious. They said there was no point in being suicidal. They would not allow me to do any work. The other leaders were reluctant to take up the responsibility of electioneering. I told Nirmal and Deben Babu that I would be very relieved if they took charge. It was not just a question of defeat or victory. I was then the president of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha. It was I who was contesting the elections, and it should not be considered unfair if I handed over my responsibilities to someone else on account of my illness. But nobody came forward to bear the burden and I was weighed down by a sense of pessimism. The ideals which I had striven for in the past few years were shattered in one blow. What treachery, deception and selfishness there was all around ! I had never wanted to establish myself in the political arena. If people felt that I could be of no service to them, I did not wish to impose myself on them. At any rate, I myself could not manage to carry on with the work due to ill health, and no one else was willing to take charge, so there was no other way out but to withdraw from the contest.

I was particularly hurt by the conduct of one person. During my illness, without my knowledge, he sent many telegrams, supposedly from me, asking people to help him financially in whichever way they could. I would foot the bill later. I had

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already given him whatever money he needed. I could not have imagined that he would have the audacity of sending those telegrams after forging my signature. All that I saw around me was greed for money, and duplicity. But not all the workers were like this. Some of them were completely trustworthy. But they were few in number, and some of them were not very efficient. I realized that my withdrawal from the elections would harm the organization immensely, but I had no other alternative. A large number of workers were disappointed, and work suffered tremendously, but I could do nothing but bow down to fate.

My illness prolonged. In the meantime, Gandhiji, Nehru and Patel came to Calcutta. There was great excitement all around. Thousands of people assembled to see them. It was as if the floodgates had been opened. Nehru, Patel, Pant and Rafi Ahmed Kidwai came to see me. Many people pressed me to join the Congress. They just did not understand that I could not join the Congress unless our differences were resolved. Nobody seemed to understand my point ! People usually tend to go with the tide and do whatever is the order of the day.

My health started improving. Gandhiji wrote to me in Hindi inquiring after my health. I wrote back in Bengali. The election results began pouring in from all over the country. The Hindu Mahasabha did not win anywhere. The Congress also did not get even a single Muslim seat. So, it was proved once and for all that while the Hindus wanted the Congress, the Muslims were all for the League. Yet, the Congress would never term itself a Hindu organization or fight for Hindus rights. Anyway, the Hindus had chosen their course of action and only time would tell whether they were right or wrong. Meanwhile, if the Hindu Mahasabha could manage to survive with the support of its genuine workers, it would certainly get a chance to forge ahead.

I had no longer the strength or desire to shoulder the responsibilities of a leader. I wanted to engage myself in such work that would keep me out of controversies and strife in the last few years of my life. I wanted to immerse myself in some constructive work to help the Hindus regain their lost glory. In December, I called a meeting of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha

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Working Committee in Calcutta. Bhopatkar was made the acting president in order to relieve me. It was decided that the Hindu Mahasabha would contest the elections according to its relative strength in the respective provinces. There was a meeting with Patel, too ; letters were exchanged, but no understanding could be reached. The Congress felt that the Hindu Mahasabha lacked popular support and the Central Assembly elections had proved this. So why would they want to work with us ?

I came here on 25th December, before which I spent four or five days with Bua in Jamshedpur. I was quite taken up by *Didibhai*. *Boudi* was expected to accompany me there. She had suggested this herself several times during my illness. But she could not make it, and *Ma* accompanied me. Keno's wife came along so that *Ma* would have a compartion. Antu came to stay with me for a fortnight. He left last Monday. This is how I spent the last two months. I could have written a lot more, but this is the essence of what happened. I realize that the events of the last two months will leave a lasting impression on me.

It is now almost 9.00 p.m. I am very tired. I have been feeling quite depressed since evening. I shall stop here for today. From now on, I will record in this diary only my thoughts, and daily events. 'Death means parting with all regrets and the thought of it gives one a strange sensation of timelessness.'

In the meantime, I have relinquished many of my duties in the University. Since 1924, for twenty-two years, I have worked tirelessly for the betterment of the University. I have now withdrawn my name from the Syndicate elections. My eldest brother will replace me. I have also asked him to stand in my place in the Assembly elections, too. I intend to write about the affairs of the University later. I stop here for the day.

Wednesday, 16 January, 1946, 8.00 p.m.

Another day has gone by. I read a little for a short while this evening. I have not been able to write much the whole day. This serene moonlit night brings to my mind many events of the past

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which are intimately connected with my life. I have been coming to this house for the past thirty-four years, ever since 1912. I have been reminiscing the whole of this evening about the various people who have visited this place and the pleasant times we have had over the years.

In 1912, I was eleven years old. How happy we were when the new house was built ! Everything was so novel—the rooms, the furniture, the lights, the garden, the trees—all were new. My grandmother, father, and eldest sister were still alive. We were seven brothers and sisters. Bahuballabh Shastri always used to accompany us to Madhupur. What a voracious appetite he had ! He used to eat *luchis* on *ekadasi,* but if meat happened to be cooked, he could not resist dipping his *luchis* into the gravy. How would he fill his stomach otherwise ? He was a great story-teller. He snored in a unique way. We used to enjoy watching his face as he snored sonorously. During the Puja holidays we stayed at Bijoy Narayan Kundu's house while our own house was under construction. One night, the bed that Shastriji was sleeping on collapsed and he fell resoundingly on the floor. It sounded like an earthquake and everyone in the house came running to see what had happened. We were scared at first, but when we saw what had happened we burst out laughing. He was a tall, hefty man and weighed at least three-and-a-half maunds. It was quite a hilarious situation, the way we had to haul up his body in the dark night, trying simultaneously to keep his long beard intact.

Biraj Babu and his family stayed in a house at Patherchapti. One of his daughters died there. I remember that tragic incident. One night, a Deputy Magistrate from Howrah hanged himself at No. 1 Kundu Bungalow, Madhupur. What a commotion there was the next morning ! I was dying to go the scene, but I was too scared of my father's admonitions.

We were all excited about the *griha prabesh*. We walked down to the new house that day. The custom was that the owner of the house was to enter first, holding on to the tail of a cow. This was assigned to my grandmother. It was not easy to find a mild-tempered cow that would not run away or charge when its tail was held. The house was not fully constructed as yet. There

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was a big house-warming party. Almost the whole of Madhupur attended it. Many people come from Calcutta as well. Most of them are no longer alive.

That was the beginning of my association with this house. For thirty-four years, it has sheltered and comforted me through the ups and downs of my life. We used to come here so often those days—during the summer holidays, Christmas holidays and Puja holidays. It was the newness of the place that had a charm of its own. With what alacrity and care we laid out the garden ! My father bought the best saplings from far and wide to plant fruit trees in the garden. We bought so many flowering plants and books. The whole house was fitted with water pipes and taps, although they could not be utilized for want of a proper water-pump. I remember our eagerness to come here during the summer holidays. The first year, my grandmother was still alive. She suffered from rheumatism, so an *akanda* shrub was planted in the garden. Since she liked to eat *chalta*, a *chalta* tree was also planted. But she died before the tree could give fruit. My mother was recounting this today while we were eating a preparation of *chalta*. All our teachers used to come here—Haren Babu, Mukunda Babu, *Panditmashai*, sometimes Satish Babu, the headmaster and many others. In summer the water was as cold as ice. We used to store it in earthen jars so that we could have a cold bath at noon. How joyous were those days ! In the afternoons, the wind would blow like a gale. We used to read, and chat, and roam around. In summer, one could get, for a rupee, twelve to sixteen seers of milk. During the Pujas, it would escalate to eight seers for a rupee.

Every meal was cooked at home. My father used to come over for the weekends by the Punjab Mail. His bed was made in readiness. We would often fall asleep before he came, but sometimes we would hear the distant sound of the train entering the station and the voice of the groom urging his sleepy horse. Then we would hear the gate being opened and we would be jubilant that our father had come. How happy we used to be for those two days ! His presence made such a big difference. Everything seemed bleak after he left for Calcutta by the evening

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train every Sunday. The scene was different during the Puja holidays, when the house would come alive. People used to throng to the house and the marble seats outside would always be fully occupied. Hours would be spent telling and listening to stories. Often, we would recite poems, sometimes memorizing them and sometimes reciting them to our father. When we were a little older, he would tell us stories of his childhood and youth. I do not now remember everything that he told us, but his words are still deeply etched in my mind. He loved entertaining people and no guest could leave the house without partaking at least some sweets. I remember once, *Pishemashai* had come to stay with us for a few days. Some bedsteads which had been ordered from Calcutta still needed to be polished. The carpenters who had been called had not turned up, but the materials for the polish had arrived. Our father called all of us and said that we would polish the beds ourselves. He got busy, sand-paper and polish in hand, and the rest of us joined in enthusiastically—young and old alike. It was great fun messing around with the polish.

Didi was actually the in-charge of the household. We would ask her for all the little things that we wanted, but were too diffident to ask our father for, and we could be sure that she would get them for us. She was such a loving sister, but she had such a tragic life. She dedicated her whole life to looking after us.

Some of our father's friends used to come over from time to time. Biraj Babu did not visit us as his daughter had died at Madhupur. Hiralal Banerjee, whom we called *Jathamashai* was a wonderful story-teller. He was very particular about his attire and would never go out without applying *attar* or rose water. He looked handsome in his pleated *dhoti and balaposh*. But he rarely took a bath. I remember one day, my father took him near the well and before the poor man could realize anything, father signalled to the gardener to pour a bucket of water over his head. It was winter and *Jathamashai* was clad in an overcoat, a *balaposh* and heaven knows what else. He almost died with fright, but nothing really happened to him.

Bhrigu, the barber, was most irregular. Once, Satish Babu took it on him to give my father a shave. Jogen Mazumdar

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offered to assist him. When the shaving was halfway through, they gave up saying that both of them could no longer steadily hold the razor as their hands were shaking. But my father did not get angry; he only laughed. *Kakababu* (Satish Chandra Mukherjee), who was quite adept, completed the job.

Food was cheap and plentiful at Madhupur those days. Milk, fish, butter, oil, ghee—everythng was easily available. Every morning, we used to have a lump of butter with *mishri*. Often Jogen Mazumdar or Satish Babu would sneak off to the privy to smoke a cigar or cheroot or make an excuse that they were going to the station in order to smoke. There was a fear of snake-bites in the evening and my father would scold anyone who came home late. We all had our meals together in the verandah. The first seat was reserved for my father. He used to enjoy sitting there, forcing extra helpings on people and at the same time telling them not to waste food.

We used to do a lot of walking. There were hardly any cars in Madhupur those days and my father was not at all in favour of bringing cars to this place. Once a gentleman from Calcutta came to Madhupur in his car. He would speed down the roads, raising clouds of dust, making it difficult for anybody to walk. One day, my father stopped him near our house and reprimanded him soundly. He was so ashamed that he never drove near our house again. Another car-owner plagued us one summer. We were not old enough to reprove him, so we plotted with our neighbours and decided on an effective means of dissuading him. We strewed the road near our house with pieces of broken glass and waited. The car came speeding along, throwing up clouds of dust all around. Its happy passengers were blissfully unaware of the fate that awaited them. There was a loud bang as two tyres burst. That was the end of their car-rides for a few days.

We would often trick Jogen Mazumdar by asking him to close his eyes and open his mouth in anticipation, and then, instead of putting hot *rasagollas* into his mouth as he expected, we would pop them into our own mouths. One night, we tied the Oriya cook's *tiki* to his bed. We would all conspire together and play

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these pranks. Mahendra Babu (Mukhopadhyaya), our teacher, was over sixty years old. He was a very amiable man and loved us dearly. Our Madhupur trips would have lost their charm without him. In winter, he used to sleep with a piece of flannel tied over his eyes. One day, we knocked on his door while he was sleeping and one of us in a hoarse voice said, 'Babu, a telegram.' He was half-asleep. He muttered sleepily and said, 'Who ? Who ? Babu telegram,' and kept repeating the refrain till he trailed off to sleep. We laughed till our sides ached. 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915 passed this way. Our grandmother died in 1914. Her room looked so deserted without her. We really missed her presence that year.

We used to go to Patharole once every year. Blood from the sacrificed animals would stream down the broken stone slabs of the floor of the Patharole temple. Occasionally, the head of a sacrificed goat would be sent to our house. Our family was very conservative. Meat used to be cooked outside the kitchen and onions were taboo. We never bought meat from the market. A little further away beside the river there was a temple. We went there once on a bullock cart. On the way back, *Didi* fell down and sprained her ankle which made her bed-ridden for a few days. After the incident we were scared of going home and facing our father's wrath.

Bura was married in Februry 1916. *Didi* became very ill later that year. She had some sort of intestinal trouble which the doctors in Calcutta could not cure. Dr Abinash Banerjee came down from Allahabad. He was a short man with a stubby beard and his face had a keen and intelligent look. My father had implicit faith in him. Earlier, he had cured my eldest brother and Biju, when they were seriously ill. For *Didi* he prescribed a diet of milk, which had to be boiled over steaming water. He also prescribed medicines for digesting it. *Didi* began to recover after a few days and then it was time for the Puja holidays. All of us went to Allahabad on the doctor's advice. I went to Agra from there—my first visit to that city—and I loved it. Gauranga Banerjee, (who was drowned with his entire family when his boat capsized in the Brahmaputra), was also with us. In Allahabad

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we got to know Satyakaka more intimately and developed a rapport with him. He was a remarkable story-teller. He stayed at a summer-house in Agra. Biraj Babu, too, was there.

The moment we reached the house, Gauranga Babu dashed off to the bathroom. It was dark and he did not notice that the commode had only three legs. We heard a shout and ran to the bathroom to see what was the matter. The commode had toppled over with him under it. The poor man was all soiled and had to take a bath in the cold winter evening. From Agra, we went to Fatehpur Sikri. We took an *ekka* to Achura station and boarded a train from there. It was a long twelve mile ride by the *ekka* and Biraj Babu was feeling most uncomfortable. He did not speak Hindi well and told the *ekka* driver, *'Arre Babu, tumhara gadite pachame bedana ho gaya.*, The humorous driver retorted, *'Huzoor, dalim to nai hua'*. We all had a good laugh.

We also went to Benaras (Kashi) for a few days. Rajendranath Vidyabhushan accompanied us. I would like to write a lot about him, but will save that for later. I got to know him for what he was in Benaras. My first impression of him had been that he was an orthodox Hindu. My *upanayan* was held in 1913 and I had a fair idea of the rituals that were to be observed by devout Hindus. I knew that a Brahmin could not eat anything without first performing the *sandhya arnhik* [evening prayer]. We were walking along the banks of the Ganges one evening. Vidyabhushan Mashai bought some hot *kachauris* from Kachauri Gali. I thought we would eat them only after reaching home. A gentle breeze was blowing from the Ganges, and he stood in the cover of the darkness and started munching the *kachauris* without the least hesitation. When I asked him about his *sandhya arnhik*, he laughed and said that in the land of Vishwanath [the deity in the Benaras temple] rituals were not necessary. We had a good time sightseeing around the city.

Writing about my acquaintance with Vidyabhushan Mashai in Benaras, I remember another incident. Many people who visit Benaras give up something or the other as a kind of offering. Vidyabhushan Mashai, who could not do without his snuff even for a moment, proudly declared that he had decided to give up

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snuff as an offering. We all realized that it was a great sacrifice on his part. I did not see him taking snuff for the two days that we spent in Benaras, but on our way back, as soon as we had crossed the Hardinge Bridge, he inhaled a large dose of snuff with his mouth slightly open and his eyes half-closed. This, perhaps, indicated a sense of relish. Taken aback, I asked him, 'What are you doing?' He replied, 'But why not? I had only promised to abstain as long as I stayed in Benaras. Now that I have left Benaras, the question of keeping my promise does not arise.' I was only fifteen then and had just started to get to know Vidyabhusan—it was an interesting beginning.

We returned to Allahabad after our trip to Agra and Benaras. It was decided that I would stay at Madhupur with *Didi*. I was supposed to have appeared for the Matriculation examination in 1916. But I had not completed sixteen years of age then, nor would I do so in March 1917. So I would not be entitled to appear in the examination before 1918. According to the rules, I would have to remain in the same class for another two years. I was studying English and French at that time. Finally it was decided that I would stay on at Madhupur with *Didi* and Mukunda Babu, my teacher, would be with us. I felt awfully grown up, for my father had given me the responsibility of managing affairs at Madhupur, and I could lord it over everybody.

We came here in early November and returned to Calcutta in March. We spent the winter here and I enjoyed myself thoroughly during our four-month stay at Madhupur. I used to go for long walks and sometimes read. I don't know how those four months passed by. In 1917, the question papers leaked out twice. A fresh re-examination was held later and those who were underage also got a chance to take the examinations. I, too, sat for it. I was not sufficiently prepared as I had never had an inkling that I would have to appear for the examination that year. However, I passed with a scholarship of Rs 10 per month.

The Sadler Commission was constituted in 1917. We went to Bombay with our father in October and consequently we did not visit Madhupur that year. We went to Puri during the Easter

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holidays and stayed at Rashbehari Babu's house. In September 1916, I visited Simla with my father. Pramatha and my uncle were with us. There are many things worth writing about what I saw in Simla, but I will not do so now. We visited many places in 1917 and 1918. In 1918, my father went to Mysore to deliver a convocation address. My I.A. examinations were due in 1919. During the Christmas holidays, *Didi*, Bura, Pochu, Nantu, Katti Dada's wife and I spent a few enjoyable days here at Madhupur. It was then quite a fashion to visit the waterfalls at Madhupur and write one's name on the rocks. I wonder if those names have been washed off in the last twenty-eight or twenty-nine years. In 1919, after my I.A. examinations, we went to Darjeeling with my father who had to write the Sadler Commission report. Many events took place there.

We came to Madhupur during the Pujas. My eldest brother got his master's degree that year and we came to Madhupur for a few days after his examinations. He developed a slight fever. Only Vidyabhushan and I were with him. Dr Haricharan Ghosh was the most well-known doctor in Madhupur. He had a long beard, spoke chaste Bengali and prescribed allopathic, homeopathic, and ayurvedic medicines as well, according to the needs of the patient. He came to check my brother and said something which I still remember : '*Sushka charme Rhus Tox deoa bideha* (in case of a dry skin it is advisable to prescribe Rhus Tox). When the fever did not abate, Vidyabhushan thought that our father should be informed. We decided to go to Calcutta ourselves, leaving the patient in the care of the doctor and a servant, as a letter might worry our father. Seeing both of us, he was alarmed and when he heard the news he berated us for leaving the patient alone. He left for Madhupur immediately, taking Dr Abinash Banerjee with him, but actually there was nothing to worry about.

Durga Puja used to be celebrated in our house those days. It first started in the year 1910. It was not possible for us to go outside Calcutta before *troyodoshi* and so we used to go for a vacation only after the celebrations were over.

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Usha was married in 1920. Our eldest brother got married after that. Many proposals were considered. *Didi*, and I specially, were the ones who approved of *Boudi*. We went to Benaras in 1920. My father was made the acting Chief Justice and we all rejoiced at the event. The new bride endeared herself to everyone as this good news coincided with her entering the family. Everyone was attracted to her and loved her. That year, Durga Puja was held in Benaras. Tears well up in my eyes when I recollect those happy days. Where have all those men and those days gone ? *Boudi* and I became very friendly in Benaras. We would spend hours chatting, my head on her lap. In July 1921, Nilu arrived ; it was such a joyous event. Puja was celebrated at Madhupur this time with great pomp and grandeur. That was the last time that we worshipped the Goddess at home.

I got married on 16th April 1922. Soon after that, we went to Dehra Dun because my eldest brother fell ill. We stopped celebrating the Pujas at home from that year. My mother fell ill during the Pujas and we could not go out anywhere. We came to Madhupur during the Christmas holidays. My father-in-law and Sudha were with us. Sudha and I used to sleep in the room in which my eldest brother's father-in-law stays now. We spent a few days in heavenly bliss. Suddenly one day, Bura got fever. It took a serious turn and we left for Calcutta on 1st January by the afternoon Express. A doctor accompanied us. On the way, near Asansol, *Didi* started complaining of a severe abdominal pain. We came to know of this when we got off from our compartment. We felt terrible seeing her suffer that way. There was such a confusion after we reached Calcutta ! *Didi* was put up in the big room on the first floor and Bura was in the next room. *Didi's* condition worsened. Many doctors came, but none could help. It was all over on the morning of 5th January. She said, 'Open the door, I want to go.' She was conscious till the end. She touched my father's feet and said, 'I have made you suffer all my life ; I could not make you happy.' What a terrible night that was ! Our lives revolved around her. She was involved in everything we did, even after we reached adulthood. She took pleasure in doing everything, especially ever since four of our brothers and sisters

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had got married. She looked after Bura's son, Nantu, as if he was her own. She had been very unfortunate—she had been widowed twice. She was the apple of our father's eye. He had given her charge of the family and made this known to one and all, lest she should feel neglected in any way. She managed the entire household. Our father would not do anything important without consulting his *Ranima*. She was the *Lakshmi* of the house. Though it is true that death brought an end to all her miseries, the void left by her death could not be filled by anyone in our family. With her death the bond that bound us together was irretrievably broken.

That year, during the Pujas, my eldest brother took my mother on a pilgrimage all over the country. She had broken down completely after *Didi's* death. My father did not express his grief openly; it was not in his nature to do so. But one could sense his agony. His health started to deteriorate. On many a night, I would see him pace the verandah even after a day of gruelling work. He could not overcome his grief over *Didi's* death. He took a month's leave from the High Court and we all went to Puri. I had my law examinations that year. I spent a few days at Puri. Sudha was with me. That was the time when we got to know each other intimately. Living away from home, we were thrown together more often. We used to go to the beach for long walks and talk late into the nights. I realized later that Sudha conceived in Puri.

During the Puja holidays, my father came to Madhupur while my mother was away on pilgrimage. Sudha went to stay with her father's elder brother at Muzaffarpur. I accompanied my father, and *Boudi* came along to look after all of us. She was very young then, but she took all the responsibilities on her shoulders. Upen Thakur our cook was there of course, and with him around, one had hardly anything to do. It is not as though he had no shortcomings, but he was very sincere and looked after us well. Benua was also with us. I used to remain by my father's side most of the time. I used to love listening to him talk. He spoke of so many things, mostly from the past. We used to go out for walks together. I never dreamt then that we would lose him in

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May 1924. *Boudi* had a bad fall while playing on the first floor. She was badly hurt and fainted. We were very worried about her but it was not that serious; but she became very weak after the fall.

Madhupur seemed to have lost its charm. There was a pall of gloom all around. Everything seemed dismal without *Didi*. We could not go anywhere during the Christmas holidays that year. In January, my father resigned a few moths before he was sixty. He accepted the brief of the Dumraon case for a fee of two-and-a-half lac rupees. Pramatha, my eldest brother, and Rupen Babu went to Patna with him. A few days later, Pochu had an attack of typhoid. Those days were really awful ! My father used to come over every weekend. He did not complain, but I could see that his health was deteriorating. Pochu's condition was serious; he was hovering between life and death. He survived somehow. At about this time, my mother had a bad dream which upset her a lot My father had gone to Calcutta from Patna. I still remember how he had stood outside the Puja room while my mother wept hysterically. She had dreamt that *Didi* had come over and said, 'I cannot stay alone. I will not take your son, but I will take away someone else. That is certain.' Who was that other person ? My mother was deeply distressed.

Santu was born on 15th April, 1924, at 2 Beharilal Chakraborty Street. He was my father's first grandson. Seeing him, he delightedly cradled him in his arms. After Pochu recovered, I went to Puri for a few days with Satish Babu, Monibabu and Nantu. From there, I went to Simla for the 'Universities Conference'. Sir C.V. Raman was with me. My father was supposed to attend the conference but he was unable to go because of the Patna case. On the day I was to leave for Simla, Madhusudan Das from Orissa had come over to see him. My father had great regard for him for he had been his teacher. I was just about to leave for the station when for some reason my father decided to see me off at the station. Madhusudan Babu left. I had intended to look up Sudha and Santu on my way to the station. Since my father was with me, I thought it would not be possible to do so.

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On that day and the day before, he and I had had a long talk in the balcony, about the University, the house, the library and his expectations of me. That year, in place of Haren Mukherjee, he had made me a Fellow of the Senate in the Faculty of Arts. At that time my father had begun to train me about University matters. On the way to the station, my father himself suggested that I drop in to see Sudha. He waited in the car and asked me to hurry up. He kept talking all the way to the station and until I boarded the train. He was not in the habit of talking so much nor had he ever before seen anybody off at the station. I could not even have dreamt then, that, that was to be our last meeting and the last time I would be touching his feet in reverence. The train left and I kept looking at him from the door till I could see him no longer.

My heart was heavy with an ineffable sadness, as though I was going far, far away from him. I was in Simla for only a few days. I received letters and telegrams from him every day. The last telegram said, 'I have fever, no anxiety. Bring toys for Nantu and walking sticks for me.' Then I got a message, asking me to return to Calcutta immediately with Nilratan Babu. On the way, I got to know that Sir Ashutosh Chowdhury had died on 23rd May. I reached Patna by the Punjab Mail at about seven in the evening. But it was too late. At 6.45 p.m. it was all over. Sir Hasan Imam, Rupen Babu and many others were waiting at the station. Even then, I did not believe that my father was dead. The house we lived in was brightly lit and there were a lot of people outside. Hasan Imam said, 'My boy, he is seriously ill.' I ran into the room. Going up the stairs, I thought I heard him snore. I felt relieved for a moment, but on entering the room, I realized that it was the whirring of the fan. There he lay, a copy of the *Gita* and a *tulsi* twig near his head. Pramatha and my eldest brother were sitting on the floor. It was the end !

This was the worst shock of my life. No one had been so dear to me as my father. He was the living embodiment of all my ideals. I just could not accept the fact that he had left us forever. My heart was rent with grief. His body was taken to Calcutta by a special train that dreadful night. My mother boarded the train at

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Jhajha, accompanied by Anath, and Gauranga's mother. She did not seem to realize that everything was over. What a terrible night it was ! My mother wanted to jump off the train. The special train arrived at Madhupur at dawn. He used to look forward to his visits here with such joy. What a twist of fate that he was passing by this place thus ! When we reached Calcutta, people thronged at the station and to the house. No one had expected this to happen. It was like a bolt from the blue.

My life changed its course on 25th May, 1924. All the mirth and joy disappeared from my life. A new chapter had begun and it continues to this day. Sitting here alone like this, I often wonder how it will all end.

I will write a bit about other things, before calling it a day. Spent another day here. I took a long walk. It is a full-moon night. Moonlight is flooding the whole place. My mind is quite calm today. I have been asking Him to show me the way. I have been thinking of Him all the more today because He has already taken away many of the people I have been writing about. They spent so many happy hours in this house. It feels good to remember them. I feel so nostalgic in reliving those days. This is the game of life ! Dear God, give me shelter at Your feet ; You are the Lord of this universe ; how insignificant we are, and yet, how vain. Never let me forget how insignificant I am, not in order to feel small and despise myself, but to be proud that I have been created by You and to live up to Your image. However insignificant I may be, I want to be merged in You by working for You. I don't want anything else. Deliver me from the consciousness of 'me' and 'mine'. This is mine, or so-and-so did not give me my due — why do I give in to such feelings ? You are mine and I am Yours. Let me find comfort in this belief. Give me strength, devotion and faith. Lead me away from deception and all evil thoughts. Oh God, reside in my soul and banish all bitterness and pettiness from my mind. Let me realize that I can depend on no one else but You.

Wednesday, 22 January, 1946

I have not written this diary for several days. Santu had come

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last Saturday. I was expecting him, and seeing him I cheered up. During this illness, I have realized how much he cares for me. He had brought a tin of Ovaltine for me. How thoughtful of him to remember that I like Ovaltine. I had just finished having tea after my morning walk on Sunday when I heard a car pull up. I hurried to see who it was. At first, on seeing the trunks and bedding on the carrier of the car, I surmised that *Boudi* had come. Nishit, Bua and *Didibhai* got out of the car. Last time, they had promised to come but they had not turned up. This time, they came without any prior notice. They had written to Santu in Burnpur, but he had come away before receiving that letter. Nishit had had the good sense of taking a day's leave. It felt good to see them, particularly *Didibhai*. How good it would be if *Boudi* too turned up that day unexpectedly. I cannot explain why, but I have been expecting *Boudi* these last two days. She has written several times that she would love to come over but somehow cannot make it.

Didibhai could not recognize me. Naturally, she had seen me for just a few days at Jamshedpur. The poor child is suffering a lot. She has sores on her throat and rash on her cheeks and her face is flushed. I love holding her close and caressing her. We have made friends again. Bua takes good care of her daughter. It fills my heart with pleasure to see the way the parents dote on their daughter. Nishit and Santu left that very night. Nishit had to go to Jamshedpur via Calcutta as his train was late. I have been so preoccupied with my granddaughter for the past few days. Time flies when I am with her. She no longer cries when she has to stay with me. A reliable maid has been found for Bua, who has been having a tough time because she does not have a maid in Jamshedpur. I had not expected her to be able to manage everything all by herself. But she has shouldered the burden without complaining, as should be done.

Didibhai is a lovely child, full of life. She has learnt how to chew food with her teeth—six in all. She is a bit choosy about people. She stared hard at her two *Didimonis'* photographs, picked them up, turned them over and caressed them. I wish Sudha was here. How happy she would have been to see her granddaughter.

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Boudi will also be very happy to see *Didibhai* when she goes to Calcutta. She nurtured her for few months after her birth. I am getting too attached to her. The sense of love and joy that fills my heart when I pick up my granddaughter in my arms cannnot last forever. We will be separated soon. I can only wish that they are happy, that *Didibhai* grows up well and becomes a worthwhile human being.

I have been keeping quite well these past few days. I walk five to six miles a day. I have dinner at the doctor's house every alternate day. Perhaps, I should have spent a few more days here to recover completely, but I am leaving on Sunday. I have received a telegram saying that the members of the Parliamentary Delegation, which has come to Calcutta, wish to meet me. I have sent a message saying that they could meet me at our house on the evening of the 28th or on the morning of the 29th. I have already spent an idle month here and I don't feel like staying on. I do not think I will return in the near future. Perhaps, I will spend a couple of weeks here sometime later on.

I have done a great deal of thinking in the solitude of this place during these past few weeks. I have found answers to many of the questions posing on my mind in Madhupur, which is quiet and serene and which is full of fond memories. But I have not yet found an answer to the most important question of how to direct my life in the future. Sometimes I feel like giving it all up. The pursuit for achievement, and aspiration for the pinnacle of success by fair means or foul does not appeal to me. I am tired of petty rivalries and disputes. I keep thinking of how the traits of despair, keenness, devotion and pain have all been incorporated in one person: I will be able to find peace only when I can truly detach myself and see things in their right perspective. I have never held back anything, I have always given myself selflessly and will continue to do so. Whether it is accepted or not is not in my hands.

How I enjoy going for walks every morning and evening. I avoid crowded places. Many thoughts flash through my mind while walking in the fields, or through familiar or unknown paths. Memories come crowding as I watch the sun rise, walk

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around the garden, amble along the winding paths behind the house, take a bath on the terrace, stretch out my feet in the afternoon sun, walk along the railway tracks, watch the many-splendoured glory of the setting sun, look out into the moonlit garden, or stare at the twinkling stars. If I started writing about all these, I would never finish. Sitting in this room with the lamp on, the events flash past my mind like pictures on a screen. Time goes on inexorably. What is past does not return, but no one can take away the joy of reliving the memories stashed away in some corner of the mind. One can never be lonely as long as one has one's memories. These evergreen memories inspire one's mind, strengthen it, and fill it with an indescribable serenity. When there is complete harmony between two people, when their feelings are perfectly tuned, one feels an ecstasy that is divine. But, if one is able to rekindle one's soul even in the sanctity of solitude, there is a sort of pleasure that uplifts the soul, which only someone who has experienced it can appreciate.

The greatest truth is in the infinite grace of the Creator of this Universe, the incomparable beauty of His kingdom, His love, and His power to forgive. The sun, the moon, the stars, the sky and the wind; the flowers, fruits and plants, man and nature; wherever I look, I see the earth brimming over with His bounty. What could be better than seeking inspiration in the silent message that God conveys through His creation, without being bound by the pleasures of this life ? But such good fortune does not grace one without effort. I must restrain my mind and learn to forget myself in His service. No consciousness of self, no vanity, no pettiness must sully this search. I must pray with all my soul, 'Make me Your own, deliver me from wrong actions, give me the strength to give up myself to You.' If I succeed in rooting out all selfish thoughts and expectations, I will surely be able to move Him, and He will accept me as His own.

But do I have it in me to invoke Him thus ? Maybe these feelings which have awakened in me more strongly now, than ever before—that He is my only succour – will bear fruit one day. Last night, the sky seemed engraved with stars which shimmered as though they were trying to say something to me.

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The pole star, in the north-western sky, is constant and it is said that it moves only once every 20,000 years. Staring into the sky, I wondered where my pole star lay. All that is beautiful, true, and pure is embodied in His creation. I have placed my faith in Him and His creation. What more can I do ? God's (and *Makali's*) grace and His bounty can never be in vain. I realize this, and that is why I appeal to Him to draw me closer, to give me succour so that I may be able to honour His bounty.

I went for a walk by the river in the evening. Such beautiful roses have blossomed in the garden of 'Tara Kutir'—the house next door. It has such sweet scented flowers. No sooner had I thought that it would be nice to have some of those flowers than the owners of the house called out to me. They gave me many roses—red, white and yellow ones—and touched my feet with respect. Where shall I keep these flowers ? How shall I honour this gift ? These flowers, beautiful enough to be a perfect offering to the gods, are being wasted. But I could not make an offering—I could not do them justice. My garden lies barren today. Flowers from another garden cannot make up for that barrenness. They do not fill my heart with the same joy.

I have been missing Hasi and Antu a lot today. I wish I could see them. I worry about Hasi. She has been brought up with so much care. I hope she marries someone who will make her happy. I fear that she may get married to a man who will not know how to look after her. I do not worry about Bua any more. Nishit is a nice boy. Antu is an introvert. I do not know what the future holds in store for him.

Monday, 27 January, 1946

I have not written for a few days. Nishit came over suddenly with Bua and *Didibhai* on the 19th. I spent a delightful week with my little granddaughter. For the first two days she would cry if she had to spend too much time at a stretch with me. But we made friends soon. And then she would spend most of the day in my lap. I managed to pick up this diary only after she left. I did write about other things, though.

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I am leaving Madhupur today. The past month has given me time for introspection. When I came here, my head used to reel if I walked even for five minutes. I realize now how weak I was. For the first fifteen days here, my health was rather poor, but gradually I picked up strength. A lovely breeze has been blowing from the west for the last few days. It would definitely have been better for me if I had stayed on here for a few more days. One reason for my going back is the telegram that was sent to me on behalf of the Parliamentary Delegation. Besides, I do not feel like staying here any more. I crave to be with everybody again. I will try to come here at the end of February for two weeks.

I have not been able to decide on any future course of action. I do not want to get involved in political factionalism. It can serve no purpose. I am sick and tired of all the disputes and quarrels. I will try to do something that will give me peace. I do not aspire for glory anymore, but I have the desire to do something constructive. I do not have the resources to enable me to do my duty to my family and still have enough left to give my dreams a concrete shape. I wish I could build an organization which would train at least twenty-five people every year, who would pledge their lives for the service of society. Where are the noble workers who would bravely take on the challenge of nation-building ? The country cannot be redeemed by political wranglings. My organization would be a centre for the study of Sanskrit; not merely to learn the language, but to explore the vast resource of knowledge enshrined in it and spread it to the people and the world at large. Whatever is of abiding value in our culture is preserved in Sanskrit—which is still inaccessible to the people. The erudite English and German scholars tried to kindle this lamp of wisdom for us, but we, in our eagerness to imbibe western education, shied away from appreciating our own culture. What a shame ! This nation can never come into its own if its search for an identity is not founded on its own culture.

I will return home tomorrow. It seems as though I am returning after an eternity. It is not possible to achieve anything if one does not have physical and mental well-being. That is why I thank God for whatever He has given me and I pray to Him to

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give me the strength and devotion to dedicate myself to Him. I have now come to realize that one's ailments and sorrows vanish if one just concentrates on Him. I feel a sense of serenity that I could never have imagined I was capable of attaining. But I am still unable to invoke Him in right earnest. I suppose, that profound ability too lies in His hands. Previously, I had never felt the urge to invoke Him thus. It is His grace that has taught me to feel this way, so I am confident that He, in His infinite mercy, will show me the right way to do it. I do not aspire for wealth, fame or glory. I will get only what I deserve and what I have laboured for, and I only seek the right to offer myself to Him. I do not wish to make any irrational demands on those whom I love dearly and whom I crave to have around me. I wish them happiness and peace. Living in this world is like living in a world of make-believe. It contains both truth and falsehood. If one achieves truth, which I have had the good fortune to attain, why should he wish to forsake it ? I want to cling to it with all my might.

Farewell Madhupur ! I have spent one month here in this house ! Some of the time spent here was happy and some moments were troubled—when I fell ill and was in unbearable pain. My mother looked after me with tender care and affection, but I was very lonely here. Let me end by expressing my gratitude to you, Madhupur, for whatever I have gained by my stay.

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Appendices

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Appendix I

Letter to His Excellency Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal.

77, Asutosh Mookerjee Road,
Calcutta,
7th March, 1942.

My Dear Sir John Herbert,

As you will be leaving for Delhi this afternoon, may I invite your attention to some important problems vitally affecting our future at this critical juncture. I am doing so in the hope that you may have an opportunity of discussing the matters with His Excellency the Viceroy and also His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief.

I yield to none in my anxiety to see that we are not enveloped in a state of defeatism, but this does not mean that you or we can or should ignore the realities of the present grave situation. For nearly two hundred years we have had nothing to do with the task of organising the military defence of India. The British Government and its chosen representatives took upon themselves the responsibility for protecting India from foreign aggression. India's wealth has been lavishly spent for this purpose. We have been kept unarmed and untrained. No Indian representative has had anything to do with the military policy of India. Since the war broke out in 1939, we were repeatedly told that India had to fight her war by defending the outer walls of this country, such as the Middle East or the Far East, specially Singapore. Recruitment of an Indian Home Army for the defence of India has not been accepted. Actually however when the crisis has come today, the outer walls have broken down and the British Prime Minister has declared with unconcealed frankness that practically we are at the mercy of the enemy, and if we survive 1942, something may happen to save us in 1943.

The fact that everywhere in the Far East the enemy is finally proving superior to ourselves is a terrible blow to British prestige. If we could have resisted somewhere and beaten down the

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enemy, something might have been said to keep alive British prestige. Over and above this, the Scorched Earth theory, which is being applied in practice elsewhere is capable of most serious consequences in India. This means that if military resistance fails, important zones will be destroyed by our own efforts so that the enemy may not get any advantage whatsoever. This was done in some parts of Russia. But there the people did this themselves after a relentless fight under national command.

You should impress upon the Viceroy that even at this late hour there should be an immediate settlement between England and India so that Indians may spontaneously feel that it is really a people's war. A strong representative national government with power to direct the defence policy of India in India's paramount interest has to be set up immediately if we are to win the war.

It is only a Chinese Generalissimo that has inspired the Chinese people to fight the enemy to the last man. It is a Stalin and his compatriots—Russia's chosen men—that have stirred Russia to unprecedented bravery. It is a Churchill, your own man, that gives you the clarion call at the hour of crisis. Your constitution permits the people of your country, acting through their representatives, to demand change of horses even in mid-stream. Prime Minister and ministers whom the country does not want are quietly got rid of in pursuance of genuine public demand. Here, on the other hand, real power is in the hands of an irresponsible bureaucracy whom we cannot remove if we consider such removal to be imperative in our national interest.

I have placed before you a number of times my proposal that we should be given the power to raise a Home Army for the defence of Bengal. People may join this army without being compelled to sign a bond that they are liable to be sent anywhere that the authorities may choose. You did not agree that this condition could be waived. Whatever may have been the argument in favour of this condition in the past, today when a grave danger has almost reached our door and your resources are hopelessly limited, there can be no reason why we should not be

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allowed to raise our Home Army for the defence of our own motherland. Australia has done so and the stirring words of the Australian Prime Minister present a wide difference from the policy pursued in India. I am sure that if the British authorities make this little gesture even at this late hour, this will capture the imagination of the people in an effective manner. The argument which is used by every educated Indian today is that we wish to defend our country but we can neither raise our own army nor have the necessary arms and amunitions.

Your objection to raise a Home Army for Bengal even at a critical time like the present, is that this is entirely against the Indian Army Policy. My reply is that today that policy must be determined first and foremost in the interest of India. If it is necessary for the defence of Bengal or India that the Bengal Home Army may have to be sent out of Bengal, that will be done. But that will be done in a clear-cut co-ordinated manner, not by expanding in an unreasonable measure the theory of India defending the outer walls of the country at the sacrifice of threatened areas in Bengal or other parts of India. We want that Bengal should be defended today by Bengali soldiers to as large an extent as possible, supplemented by other Indian soldiers, if necessary, and only as a last step, by non-Indian soldiers. Your next objection is that sufficient arms and ammunitions are not available. I shall not waste your time by asking whose fault it is that there is no larger production of equipments for India's use today, but I shall say this that we shall arrange for increased production to the best of our ability and shall give training to our Home Army with such limited arms as may be available today. Here again, pray recall to your mind the stirring appeal made by Madame Chiang Kai-shek and also the Australian Prime Minister. China's supply of arms and ammunitions was extremely limited and the lady declared with commendable pride that when the Chinese people started fighting Japan, they had nothing but their hands, their flesh and their blood. The Australian Prime Minister said that they had also suffered from lack of arms and when they started reorganising their Home Army, they had to use broom-sticks at one stage of the training.

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Such objections as you have raised are indeed of no value at this critical hour. Difficulties there are undoubtedly. I shall not even ask who has been responsible for India's helplessness, provided we really go ahead with a new policy. Difficulties must be faced and surmounted boldly if we are to survive this crisis. The real obstacle will be want of trust. Are you prepared to trust us even today ? The verdict of history will be against you if you deny us the elementary right of raising our Army according to our needs. Either, you say that you will protect us and military defence of an adequate measure will be available at the required time—this answer may be humiliating to the national sentiment of India who asks for the exercise of the right of self-defence; but even then an assurance of this character will have considerable practical importance. On the other hand, if you cannot give us the assurance that India will be saved, why should there be a hesitation on your part in allowing the people of the land to defend themselves in such manner as they consider best even at this last hour ? Let India's interests be the supreme factor today and let Indians themselves decide how best to tackle the grave peril into which *you* have thrown us.

You will ask how will such an army save Bengal from air attacks at this eleventh hour. If we can strengthen our own Air Force, a fight may be given. But is it not quite possible that Japan may some day in the near future land in Bengal and if that happens, we may have to face the brutal realities of a guerilla warfare ? How are we prepared to resist this menace ? The Japs may spread themselves in different parts of the province. What forces are there to combat such an aggression ? Then again there is the question of maintenance of internal security. It is only with the help of disciplined forces, mainly consisting of the people of the land, which may not even be fully armed at the beginning, that we can hope to rouse the true spirit of courage and fearlessness in the minds of the people at large. My idea is that every district, sub-division and thana should have its own Home Army under the unified control of a Government department. This will not act as a watertight section but in full co-operation with the civil authorities. It will be the people's army for saving

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their hearth and home from the impending attack of the enemy and from internal chaos.

I do not minimise civil defence activities. They are essential. But if you concentrate mainly on them, you automatically encourage the outlook of a defeatist. After all it is only passive resistance. The disposal of the dead and debris is of importance for saving the places which may be attacked. But civil defence and military defence must be fully co-ordinated and in both spheres they must represent the people's best efforts controlled by the representatives of the people themselves. We as ministers are completely in the dark regarding the military policy in our part of the country. Immediate co-ordination between civil and military policy is essential and this must be done with the full co-operation of the people's representatives.

There will be many objections, as I have said before, from routine standpoint. But my appeal to you and through you to the Viceroy is that you must be bold enough today to discard red-tape and rusty bureaucratic notions of administration. As I have told you repeatedly, there are many Indians who do not like that British administration should be perpetuated in India. But there is no sensible well-wisher of India who desires that India should start on a fresh career of foreign subjugation under Japan. We have almost reached the end of our journey so far as our relationship with England is concerned. What is required now is a broad statesmanship based on a full recognition of the fact that India must in future be controlled by Indians themselves. With tact and courage on both sides we shall remain as friends for all times to come. But you have to play the game and win back our confidence. Not a day should be lost in retracing the wrong steps taken in the past. I would ask you most earnestly, as one who desires that Bengal and India should be saved from foreign aggression, that you may come back from Delhi with a definite message that will rouse the spontaneous enthusiasm of the people of this province. You should on your return, address the Legislature and announce that the provisions of the Army Act will be held in abeyance, and Bengal will be given the right to raise a special Home Army of at least two lacs of people for the

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defence of Bengal. Other schemes for strengthening the Air Force and for providing an increased production of arms and ammunitions will also be taken in hand immediately. A Provincial Committee of National Defence consisting of representatives of civil and military authorities will be set up in Bengal. Old political differences will be kept in the background and the co-operation of all those who are in favour of fighting the enemy will be readily sought for. I have not the least doubt that such an announcement will be hailed with great earnestness throughout the province and we shall usher in a new spirit that will face the enemy dauntlessly, no matter how strong and ruthless he may be. Along with this, if the larger political settlement is also reached, Britain will not only make a new history in India during the period of war, but also will stabilise the cause of democracy and freedom throughout the world.

I do not know if the Commander-in-Chief proposes to visit Calcutta but I hope you will please show my letter both to him and to His Excellency, the Viceroy.

Yours sincerely,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

NOTE : *No written reply was sent to me to the above letter. From my conversations with the Governor I found that my proposals were unacceptable.*

S.P.M.

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Appendix II

Letter to His Excellency Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal.

Camp, New Delhi,
26th July, 1942

Dear Sir John,

I have been thinking over the questions which we discussed at some length at the last Cabinet Meeting, specially arising out of the threatened Congress movement. It is of utmost importance that there should be complete understanding between you, as Governor, and your colleagues during the present critical period. I am addressing this letter to you today entirely on my own behalf, but I propose to send copies of my letter to my other colleagues and specially show it to the Chief Minister after his arrival in Delhi.

You will recall that the present Cabinet consists of representatives of different groups in the Legislature which did not exactly see eye to eye with each other on many vital political questions. The parties however joined together under the leadership of the present Chief Minister and decided to give him their support in the formation of the new Cabinet on a general understanding, that the new ministry would work for the maintenance of communal harmony based on a policy of just administration affecting all communities, and also lend its whole-hearted support for the purpose of winning the war. We all felt that the salvation of India lay not in emphasising our mutual differences but in minimising them as far as possible during the present emergency, and in concentrating on these vital issues which equally affected all communities, specially realising the need for the maintenance of internal security and the strengthening of war efforts in an effective manner. For carrying out this policy it was essential that even within the framework of the present Constitution, responsible ministers must have wide powers to act for the

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good of the province, unhampered by interfering or obstructive activities of the Governor and the permanent officials concerned. We on our part have been able to demonstrate that Hindu and Muslim representatives can work together in a spirit of common understanding, in spite of grave provocations coming from within and without.

It is an open secret that the Hindu and Muslim combination in Bengal under Mr Fazlul Haq's leadership was not welcomed by a section of permanent officials. It is not possible for me to say definitely how far this was due to a dislike of the present combination itself which included persons, specially amongst Hindus, who in the past expressed their opposition to many administrative acts. It might have been due also to an inordinate attachment which persons in high quarters have for the Muslim League, which has been definitely weakened by the formation of the new ministry by Mr Fazlul Haq. We are often told that India's future political advancement was being retarded because of the failure of leaders of Hindus and Muslims to work together in the sphere of State Administration. For the first time in the history of British India, whatever democratic constitution has been handed over to us, in spite of its manifold defects, was sought to be worked in Bengal by Hindu and Muslim representatives who wielded considerable influence over their own community. The success of this experiment naturally would give a lie direct to the plea of communal disharmony standing in the way of India's political advancement. It would be therefore to the interest of diehard officials to see that this experiment proved a failure.

To speak frankly, your own attitude towards the ministry has been far from satisfactory from the very beginning. I shall not recall here the hesitation that you had shown to call upon Mr Fazlul Haq to form a new Cabinet after the last ministry had resigned early in December. I shall not discuss how Calcutta and indeed the whole of Bengal were thick with rumours that Sir Nazimuddin, although he was in a minority, had received some sort of assurance from high quarters, that he and not Mr Fazlul Haq would be asked to form the new Cabinet. Keeping these

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incidents in the background, let me record here my keen sense of disappointment and surprise that during the last seven months you should have constantly harped on the need for a settlement with the Muslim League at any cost. A division among the Hindus by reason of the Congress refusal to accept office did not worry you so much. The activities of some organisations mainly composed of Hindus, leading, according to the police reports, to weakening of Governmental authority, justified strong measures against them. But though the Muslim League for seven months carried on a relentless and vituperative campaign against the ministry and specially the Chief Minister, thus weakening the forces of law and order and rousing communal passions, you all along characterised them either as constitutional agitation by the Opposition or mere attacks on ministers individually which did not affect Government as such. Far from encouraging Mr Fazlul Haq and his colleagues to go ahead with full speed you deemed it necesary to advocate the cause of the Muslim League in season and out of season. This special pleading for the League which in fact made us look upon you at times not as an impartial constitutional head of the province but as a loyal and distinguished whip of the Muslim League party itself, was indeed a mystery to all of us. You knew it perfectly well that we were not opposed to any party coming into the ministry, and thus to form a complete National Cabinet, but obviously that could not be done by sacrificing the honour and prestige of the Chief Minister or breaking the unity of the Progressive Coalition Party. The contention of the Muslim League Party was that it could never come to the Cabinet so long as Mr Fazlul Haq remained Chief Minister. My opposition to this proposal was not merely actuated by a sense of loyalty to my leader, but I honestly felt that this demand, if met, would virtually mean the uprooting of the fundamental principle on which the present Progressive Coalition Party was based. Mr Fazlul Haq was attempted to be made a victim of sordid personal animosity. During the last seven months he was branded by his ex-colleagues and ex-supporters as a traitor to Islam and a betrayer of the Muslim cause because he had joined hands with us, Hindus, in sharing

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the responsibility of office. We are now told that Sir Nazimuddin and his friends have no objection to work with us as representatives of the Hindu community, but Mr Fazlul Haq must go. I have never been able to make you realise that there is no justification for this demand unless it was for holding up Mr Fazlul Haq before the Muslim community as one who was made to suffer for his alleged lapses—although the same critics were prepared to do in July, 1942, exactly what Mr Fazlul Haq had the foresight and courage to do in December, 1941.

While you had shown this inordinate anxiety to re-establish Muslim League in its position of supremacy, if necessary by sending away, as you used to say, Mr Fazlul Haq 'in a blaze of glory', you showed no anxiety whatsoever to accede to our request for consolidating nationalist opinion, specially uniting the Hindu community. In various matters, such as release of political prisoners or a change in the policy of arrests and detention, or the Home Guard scheme as finally prepared by the Chief Minister, we had made proposals which, in our opinion, would have secured spontaneous co-operation from large sections of the people of Bengal, Hindus and Muslims, fully consistent with the security of the province; and they met with nothing but continued obstruction from you stage after stage.

The pity of it is that you have allowed yourself to be guided in vital matters concerning the rights and liberties of the people by the advice of one section of permanent officials and not by your constitutional advisers. Section 52 of the Government of India Act which clothes you with special responsibility, is capable of a very wide interpretation especially during the period of the war. You have allowed to function, in this province, a government within a government, where real power has been wielded by men who have very little responsibility in carrying on the constitutional Government of the province with the willing support of the people. This is a serious charge. But it is just as well that you should know that whether consciously or unconsciously you have created this deep impression in the minds of your ministers, which is hardly consistent with the good administration of the province.

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With regard to military questions, barring occasional interviews and general discussions with some military officers, the ministry as a whole has remained in the background. It is a fact that consultations have been held in Government House between you and military officers, where even some permanent officials were present, but the ministers were conspicuous by their absence. During this critical period there was ample room for co-operation in this sphere, but you have not encouraged it for reasons which I need not discuss.

Let me now refer to the situation that may be created in the province as a result of any widespread movement launched by the Congress. Anybody, who during the war, plans to stir up mass feelings, resulting in internal disturbances or insecurity, must be.resisted by any Government that may function for the time being. But mere repression is no remedy when the promoters of the movement assert and make people believe that they too want to resist the impending attacks of the enemy, not as a slave country but as a free one; but the Ruling Authority is determined not to transfer real power to the children of the soil. As I had told you already, I genuinely believe that Japanese aggression must be resisted by us in our own interest. Japan does not intend to come to India to give us freedom. Indeed no foreign power, whatever its pretentions may be, occupies the territory of a weaker nation except for domination and exploitation. We do not want any foreign domination in India. Japan and Hitler must on this account be deemed as our enemies and must be resisted. As regards India's attitude towards England, the struggle between them, if any, should not take place at this juncture. The present war is being fought not for perpetuation of British domination over India. Old ideas of Imperialism must be buried underground, and they are not going to revive, whatever the result of the present war may be. If this was not so, no self-respecting Indian would be at all interested in the war. What I want to see done is that spokesmen of British interest in India should repeat, specially in Bengal which is now one of the immediate danger areas, that the right of India's independence has been recognised by Britain, and we are fighting together a

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common enemy on a new basis altogether. India cannot fight Japan alone and must accept the help of the Allied nations.

There must be complete change in the old bureaucratic standpoint. There are thousands of families who actuated by a desire to serve their motherland had struggled with the then existing machinery of British administration in India in spheres big and small. Today we do not wish either party to rake up past differences. Today the issue is : do we regard the new aggression from Japan or Germany as a menace to the cause of human liberty including that of India ? Your call to the people of Bengal as the representatives of the British Crown should be directed to every son and daughter of the province, irrespective of his or her present or past political activities. I feel definitely convinced that even at this late hour we can create a People's War Front which would include within its sphere, everyone who is prepared to put up a stubborn fight against the impending aggression of the enemy. There is no difficulty about those whose past political views do not create any doubt in your mind. But many of your permanent officers, and I believe you also, influenced as you are by their opinion, very often tremble at the thought of accepting the co-operation of patriotic Bengalis who, to put it even at its worst, were hitherto the enemies of British policy in India. Here you have to rise to the full height of your statesmanship if you can hope to discharge truly the great responsibility of your office. If I were to deal with them in my own way, I would immediately establish personal contact with all of them and offer them a willing hand of co-operation. I shall say that the ideal for which they fought so long has been achieved. It is recognised today by Britain and her representatives in India that so far as Britain and India go, India's right of independence is acknowledged. Therefore, there is no further quarrel between them and us as regards our past relationship. As regards the present and the future, the main problem is to beat the enemy out of our country. If the enemy wins, then the freedom that is to come to us after the war will not be achieved.

If there is agreement on this fundamental point, I shall then sit down with them and without asking for any written undertaking

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from any of them, I would give them my help and co-operation in drawing out a comprehensive programme of work, e.g., the place they will work in, the nature of their activities, how they will address people, what will be their relationship with the officials, etc. Each of these topics will be frankly discussed and an understanding reached. After they have regained their liberty, if reports reach us that they have betrayed the cause, and that they are acting in a manner which will be of help to the enemy, it will then be the duty and the responsibility of the ministry to restrict their movements and to face the province boldy with the policy which the ministry will then have to pursue. From my discussions with some of the important police officials in Calcutta on Friday, especially from the viewpoint expressed by Mr Ray of the Special Branch, I could see that they were still obsessed by the idea that these young men, in view of their past conduct, were not to be trusted at all. He referred to secret reports gathered by him regarding the activities of some of the affected people. But I could see at once that the entire method of approach had been a wrong one.

Trust will beget trust. There have been occasions in history when parties fighting with each other had joined together for a common cause. What about Russia ? Who could have dreamt that Russia and England would stand solidly together for beating a common enemy ? Are representatives of the two countries today discussing their past differences, or questioning each other's sincerity in relation to their past activities ? That should also be the relative attitude between England and India today. We in Bengal cannot settle the tangle for the whole of India, but under your leadership we can start this experiment immediately in Bengal, and I feel sure of the tremendous response that we are bound to receive. If there are permanent officials who conscientiously feel that they are unable to carry forward this new policy, they should serve this country and theirs much better if they took their pension and went back to England. After all, it should not be forgotten that we stand very close to a devastating war which has already done havoc in several countries which were previously under British occupation. May I ask where are those

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high permanent British officials who were the trustees and guardians of the local inhabitants of those lands ? Many of them have quietly or hurriedly left those countries, but people belonging to the land are still suffering misery at the hands of the enemy. Today you have no right to keep behind the prison bars or under restriction any Bengali who offers the hand of co-operation to serve his province at this time of national peril. The machinery to watch their movements will be there, and if after testing each case, it appears to responsible ministers, and not to antiquated officials, that there are betrayers among the persons whom we want to trust, they will be dealt with severely by the ministers themselves without hesitation.

The proposed Congress movement has to be examined from a new angle of vision on the present occasion. In the past, a similar movement affected only the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Today, the movement will assume tremendous importance in view of the fact that the enemy is standing near the gate. The detailed programme of the movement has not been disclosed yet. The announcement made by the Working Committee that the British is being asked to withdraw, followed by further explanations that such withdrawal will not interfere with the British or Allied troops remaining in India and fighting the enemy, discloses considerable loose thinking. The British withdraws. No constituted Government is determined by the British, by agreement with Indians or otherwise, to whom power will be handed over at the time of withdrawal. In each province and at the Centre, people sit round the table and form provisional Governments. The British troops continue to remain in power. And things go on merrily. If the Indian problem had been such an easy one, India would have attained freedom long ago. If the British withdraws today in implicit obedience to the demand of the Congress, neither the provinces nor the Centre can set up generally acceptable Governments, but chaos and civil war will ensue almost immediately. The Hurs may take over charge of certain territories, and other organized elements may also take their chance. The British troops under military command would also naturally like to take advantage of the situation and may

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establish military rule over the entire country. The whole scheme, unless it is further explained, is capable of such preposterous developments that people with ordinary intelligence are not likely to think much of it.

But it will be a colossal mistake to suppose that people would care to scrutinise the scheme in all its details or in a spirit of scientific detachment. The movement will at once stand as a symbol for India's attempt to attain self-government. And that is how the Congress is bound to appeal to the imagination and the patrotic impulse of Indians. The general issue before the country will be somewhat as follows : here is a war which we want to support. But we would like to support it not as slaves but as free men. The Allied Powers say they want to crush the possible domination of the world by brute force, but when it comes to a question of giving real power to India, all sorts of obstacles are raised and India continues to be a dependent country. If that is the situation, and if England refuses to settle with India, it proves that this war, whatever may be the result, will not alter the fate of India. It is therefore necessary that India should in a non-violent spirit record her protest against the manner in which her just claims are being treated by the rulers who pay lip sympathy to the cause of world freedom and progress. Such will be the line of argument.

The question is how to combat this movement in Bengal ? The administration of the province should be carried on in such a manner that in spite of the best efforts of the Congress, this movement will fail to take root in the province. It should be possible for us, specially responsible ministers, to be able to tell the public that the freedom for which the Congress has started the movement, already belongs to the representatives of the people. In some spheres it might be limited during the emergency. Indians have to trust the British, not for the sake of Britain, not for any advantage that the British might gain, but for the maintenance of the defence and freedom of the province itself. You as Governor will function as the consitutional head of the province and will be guided entirely on the advice of your ministers. Permanent officials must be made to feel that ministers

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will have both power and responsibility, and that they can never approach you over the head of the ministers, or by way of appeal from their decisions. The policy to be pursued by the ministers will be related on the one hand, to the genuine economic and political rights of the people, and on the other hand, to the paramount needs of defence against the enemy's attack. It is only by a transfer of power to Indians that you can hope to win the active and willing support of the people of Bengal.

We shall have to examine immediately the special spheres of activity, and classes of people who may be liable to be influenced by a mass movement, and see how far their just grievances can be properly adjusted. I would proceed somewhat in the following manner :–

1. Middle-class Hindus : They form the backbone of every political struggle. It is no use trying to crush their spirit or throw them into prison cells. If there are amongst them, or amongst any other class, people who have any contact, direct or indirect, with the enemy, they shall be dealt with severely by a responsible minister after proper enquiry. The number of such leaders must be small. The bulk that follows them are often carried away by their patriotic zeal. They must at once be imbued with the passionate idea that India's freedom is India's birthright, and Japan which is coming to occupy India, must be resisted at any cost. They must be given proper occupation and scope for serving their country. I would immediately adopt a scheme of militarisation under proper military control. I have repeatedly asked you to obtain permission to raise at least one lac of Bengali soldiers for the defence of Bengal. You have raised three objections every time when I have approached you on this question, and to my mind none of these objections can stand a moment's scrutiny. You have said Bengal cannot have her own army. That may be the present regulation. That regulation is man's creation and man can undo it. If one way to settle our problem is to allow us to raise an army of our own under proper control and discipline, no one has a right to object to this proposal. Secondly, you have said there are no arms and ammunitions. We are not going to tolerate this excuse for ever

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and for good. Arms and ammunitions must be manufactured by us or imported into India from other countries. Everyone may not be given arms immediately, but a beginning must be made with the least delay. Thirdly, you have said that there are no trainers. Trainers have to be brought from other parts of India or of the Empire, if necessary. All these objections must be surmounted and a failure to do so affords a legitimate ground for a movement such as the Congress proposes to start. My country is in danger. I want my countrymen to take up arms for the defence of my motherland. I realise that this has to be done for the present with British co-operation. I welcome such co-operation, but why should there be delay in satisfying this legitimate desire of the people of this country ? That the last Bengal Battalion failed, is no answer. We shall now raise our army under different auspices altogether. Would you have liked your own country to be defended by people belonging to other countries and you be treated with a similar excuse by your rulers such as we are accustomed to hear from you ? The real obstacle is distrust. Are you prepared to trust Indians and Bengalis with arms ? There should be no difficulty on this point either, if you say that you have no desire to remain here after the war. When you withdraw, this army will be handed over to the new National Government that is to come in future as a result of the Indo-British settlement.

There is one point regarding the pay of Indian sepoys and non-Indian soldiers and others in higher ranks. Why do you maintain discrimination of pay ? I believe an Indian gets Rs 16 per month and a non-Indian soldier receives Rs 90 per month. So also is the case in higher ranks. These are factors which breed discontent which no argument can answer. The Bengal Army that will be formed should consist of an equal number of Hindus and Muslims, subject to qualifications. I think if we commence recruitment within one week and give a call to the people properly, we shall not only get immediate response but also take away a considerable portion of the support that the Congress may hope to get out of its movement.

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2. I have already explained how I would deal with those persons who are now detained or restricted for political activities.

3. I would re-examine the principles behind the Denial Policy. To my mind it has been a hasty and ill-thought of scheme which has greatly exasperated thousands of individuals belonging to both communities. Mere compensation in the shape of money does not meet the situation. Why should you follow the Denial Policy in the way in which it has been done ? Just imagine for a moment what are its implications. It breathes an atmosphere of defeatism. We do not know when the Japanese propose to invade Bengal, but we take it that they will meet with a tremendous resistance here. That resistance will be mainly offered not by a policy of non-co-operation which is the basis of the denial scheme, but by a vigorous and aggressive offensive lodged by the Allied forces. Long before that happens, people are deprived of their boats, carriages, bicycles, etc. They are not only put to tremendous personal inconvenience, but there is serious dislocation of trade and business. As I said the other day, unnecessarily we have deprived ten thousand persons in one district alone of their bicycles. Are they entertaining feelings of friendship towards us ? A revision of the Denial Policy in consultation with the military authorities is essential so as to minimise the widespread discontent that prevails in all parts of the province. Let registration and a scheme of effective control be completed which we can give effect to if emergency requires it.

4. The evacuation policy also needs considerable adjustment. There have been occasions when at military request, evacuation was ordered and then later on the military authorities changed their minds. As you have yourself said a number of times, it should be possible for Government to draw up an elaborate scheme for resettlement of evacuees at Government expense, and this should be attended to immediately.

Government of India should also be asked to agree to the principle of payment of compensation to the evacuees when they will resettle on their former lands and houses. There are bitter complaints against some local officers with regard to the method and manner of distribution of compensation. The remedy lies not

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in arresting the people who agitate but in removing the grievances themselves.

5. Control of prices and supply of essential foodstuff and cloth : This matter is assuming a serious turn and will afford a good ground for spreading Congress propaganda. The Government of India must realise that in the matter of transport priorities, supply of foodstuff is of as much importance as that of commodities required for military operations. Mere appointment of a few officers will not solve the problem. Price control, unless it is closely related to supply, will be worse than useless.

6. Along with price control we must take a long view of the possibility of increasing Bengal's production of essential commodities for her own consumption. The Agricultural and Industrial Department should make a special survey of this aspect of the problem before it becomes more acute.

7. Labour problem : This is another sphere where attack may be launched. Just grievances of the labourers must be boldly and sympathetically looked into. We must establish personal contacts with all sections of labour leaders, and there must be an agreement as regards the general policy to be pursued by them. If that policy is not observed in practice by the labour leaders, we must not hesitate to take steps against them after due enquiry. But our first attempt should be to work out a scheme for mutual co-operation and goodwill.

8. Possible economic distress must be guarded against. One such problem relates to jute. It appears, roughly speaking, that even if the jute mills are allowed to produce goods and keep stock at their present rate, the agriculturists and the middlemen will have in hand nearly fifteen to twenty lacs of bales of jute on account of the worsening of export conditions. This might result in a serious economic depression effecting lacs of poor agriculturists who are today already burdened with distress on account of the Denial Policy and the evacuation schemes. We did not reduce jute production below eight annas per acre at the suggestion of the Government of India, and it is imperative that they should now take financial responsibility for purchasing the surplus jute

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and keeping it in stock for the next year. This matter has to be taken up with the Government of India as soon as possible.

9. In the past, political movements mainly attracted the Hindus. On this occasion it is quite possible that in view of the discontent prevailing among the Muslim masses due to the Denial Policy, evacuation schemes and a possible jute crisis, the situation may further worsen and act as a stimulant to Muslim masses to join hands with any movement that throws the blame on the shoulders of the Government.

10. Attitude towards the opponents of Government, particularly the Muslim League: Once we succeed in defining our provincial policy on a broad and national basis as outlined above, we shall be in a better position to ask for the co-operation of all sections of the public. If that co-operation is not forthcoming, while we shall be ready to receive constructive suggestions from every quarter, we must not hesitate to fight any organisation that merely intends to stir up communal or political passions. We may appoint a few special officers whose duty will be to receive information about local grievances, communal or otherwise, and Government will see that every such grievance is promptly dealt with. But during the war any attempt to spread discontent must be effectively resisted. We can do so, not by mere repression of individuals or organisations. That will not win public support in favour of Government. Our declared policy must be such as will convince the people that the fullest measure of Provincial Autonomy, subject to a well-co-ordinated Central Policy, relating to defence and other measures, is being actually enjoyed by responsible ministers, and that both the Governor and the permanent officials are loyally respecting this new convention. That declaration of general policy must be followed by actual deeds which will show the people that their rights and liberties are being protected, and that their economic and other interests are not being subordinated to considerations opposed to the welfare of India or of Bengal. Along with this, if there is an *ad hoc* machinery set up, as proposed, to enquire into and remedy grievances promptly and effectively, public confidence will be restored and spontaneous co-operation in respect of war efforts

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obtained. Subject to these steps being taken, we must suppress all attempts to spread communal or racial hatred or to rouse mass passions otherwise.

11. Military Policy : This is a sealed box to us and it places us in a most embarrassing situation. We do not wish to know details, for these are military secrets. But we must be consulted on general questions of policy. One important viewpoint I desire you to convey to the proper quarters is that we shall never win this war by merely trying to defend ourselves. There must be direct and bold attacks, based on a well-co-ordinated offensive policy, otherwise the enemy will never be beaten. It was indeed amazing that when enemy planes came to Bengal and bombed Chittagong, there was no attempt to chase them away from the frontiers of India. It was well known that enemy planes were flying over large tracts of land in eastern Bengal and Assam, but hardly any attack was launched on them. The effect of this policy is disastrous on public morale. After the fall of Singapore, Malaya and Burma, it is generally felt that there is no desire to put up a real and stubborn fight and Bengal may suffer the same fate as Burma has done. Public morale will revive automatically only with some great Allied victories. In any case if the news of an air raid by the enemy leading to loss of life and property is immediately followed by a stirring report of our own counter-attack on the enemy planes resulting in their losses, public confidence becomes immediately restored. The truth is, the present war cannot be fought to a finish by an army, however well-paid and well-equipped, unless the army is imbued with a religious fervour so that it will rather face death than retreat or surrender an inch of the sacred land that it is called upon to defend. That feeling of sacredness is attached to one's own motherland and comes spontaneously, not from a hired or meagrely paid army, but from an army that consists of the children of the soil. The new strategy of glorious retreats has always the chance of over-shooting its mark. We rather prefer to hear more of Russian Suicide Squads that must stagger any enemy, however powerful. When they assemble on the fighting ground, the heroic soldiers of China and Russia feel, every

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moment of their lives, that they are standing on a free land that has belonged to them for generations past, hallowed by sacred memories; they spontaneously feel roused and determined to shed the last drop of their blood, and to defy death, rather than to allow the enemy to win. It is for this reason that I ask you with all the emphasis at my command that you should take immediate steps for raising a Bengali army in land, sea and air, and ask them to defend their own freedom.

I hope you will appreciate the spirit which has prompted me to write this letter to you. No one knows what the future has in store for us. As one of your ministers, I am willing to offer you my whole-hearted co-operation and serve my province and country at this hour of crisis. The conditions which I have mentioned above are of a general character. They are mentioned not for creating any obstacle. They indicate to you, who are after all a foreigner, how an Indian would like to co-operate with you in the service of his country that is threatened with imminent danger. They indicate how the present constitution is a hindrance to the development of those vital forces without which the present war cannot be won. Their acceptance will not require any Parliamentary statute. What is needed is a broad statesmanship which should permit both the Viceroy and yourself to establish healthy conventions and to hand over complete power to the Bengal Ministry with you as the constitutional head to deal with the vital problems I have mentioned. In matters of defence the power will obviously be of a limited character. On the answer that you will give to this letter will not only depend the sincerity of the declarations that you and the Viceroy have made from time to time, but also the future welfare of my province. I shall only conclude by saying that what I have asked for is nothing but power for the chosen representatives of the people to be shared with you during the war, a power which you can part with, only if you have genuinely made up your mind that this war is really a war of conflicting ideologies between brute force and dominination on the one hand and human progress and liberty on the other, and that you stand solidly in favour of the latter.

Yours sincerely,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee

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Appendix III

Letter to His Excellency Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy and

77, Asutosh Mookerjee Road,
Calcutta,
12th August, 1942

Dear Lord Linlithgow,

May I take the liberty of making an earnest appeal to you and through you to the British Government to reconsider the Indian political situation ? No one genuinely interested in the welfare of India wants that the Axis Powers should win the war, for their victory is a peril to the cause of world freedom and specially to Indian liberty. For the sake of winning the war and for mobilising public opinion and the great resources of India, it is essential that India should have a free political status immediately. It is not enough for you to declare that India will attain freedom after the war. Immediate attainment of a free and equal status is not a mere expression of an abstract right but an essential condition for successful prosecution of the war itself. My experience as a provincial minister under the present Constitution convinces me that the present system of administration which places the final power of veto in the hands of the British representatives and which provides scope for interference with the legitimate activities of the minister can never serve the war-time requirements of the country. Gigantic preparations for Indian defence cannot be made satisfactorily unless a National Government has the power to formulate and carry out a well-balanced policy for the purpose.

The lessons of Burma should be an eye-opener to all right-thinking British statesmen. The British Power, which controlled the destinies of that country during the period of its struggle with Japan, collapsed and made its exit from the country when it found that it had to yield to the superior strength of the enemy. On the other hand, if Burma was a free country, acting

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with the fullest co-operation with Britain and other Allied Powers, the people and their representatives would not have beaten a retreat but fought with their life-blood for maintaining every inch of a country whose freedom it was their sacred duty to uphold at any cost. It is therefore essential that India's free status should be recognised immediately and the people of the country called upon to defend their own country in co-operation with the Allied Powers, and not merely look upon Britain to fight the impending aggression.

The demand of the Congress, as embodied in its last resolution, virtually constitutes the national demand of India as a whole. It is regrettable that a campaign of mis-representation is now being carried on in some sections of the foreign press characterising the Congress demand as a virtual invitation to Japan and a surrender to chaos and confusion. No one desires that India should be plunged into a mass movement resulting in disorder and anarchy. At the same time a refusal on the part of the British Government to deal with the real demand of the people in a spirit of true statesmanship will be an even greater disaster ; for by this unwise decision it is they and not the Congress who will precipitate a crisis in India. Just as the Congress has a duty not to do anything suddenly which is bound to lead to chaos and disorder, so also have you a similar duty to ensure that there can be no just cause for discontent and disaffection resulting in chaos and disorder. Repression is not the remedy at this critical hour. Indeed the history of all countries struggling for freedom amply discloses that the greater the repression from the ruling power, the more intense is the spirit of resistance of the people who regard themselves as oppressed and downtrodden. You may keep down by a severely repressive policy the external manifestations of discontent—even that may become difficult to achieve without using extraordinary force, which again will have the most disastrous effects on the public mind of India. But even if you succeed, discontent is bound to be driven underground and anti-Government, especially anti-British, feelings will stiffen throughout India. The enemy's object will be attained, for he cares not about Indian freedom but

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merely wants a chaotic condition in India, of which he will not fail to take the fullest advantage at the right hour. Indeed a blind pursuit of a repressive policy and a failure to satisfy India's legitimate aspirations may well create an atmosphere in India which will make us look upon the enemy as a virtual liberator from the hands of the British oppressors—a state of feeling with which many Indians hailed your ancestors under different surroundings in this very country about two hundred years ago, when they gradually changed from their role of traders to that of masters of Indian affairs.

I therefore appeal to you to take a realistic view of the Indian situation which must be examined in the light of rapidly changing world movements. There is none who is satisfied with the present system of Indian administration, and an immediate transfer of power is essential for the solution of the Indian deadlock. The substance of the Congress demand is nothing more than this. If there is a hidden motive to the contrary in the minds of the Congress leaders, which I for one am not prepared to believe, that motive will come out in its true colour as soon as your constructive proposals for the transfer of power are made known to the public of India.

What is regarded as the most unfortunate decision on the part of the British Government was its refusal to negotiate with Mahatma Gandhi, even after he gave his emphatic assurance that the movement would not start until all avenues for an honourable settlement had been explored. Indeed, the movement has not been started by the Congress but it is the British policy which has accelerated the crisis. This is an important aspect of the present situation which one cannot but deplore.

I would request you to apply your mind immediately to the problem of the solution of the present deadlock which is equally disastrous to India and Britain. May I make certain tentative proposals which may well form the basis of an honourable Indo-British settlement ?

1. The British Government should declare that India's freedom is formally recognised.

2. The Viceroy or any one deputed by the British Cabinet will

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be authorised to negotiate with the Indian political parties regarding the formation of an Indian National Government to whom power will be transferred.

3. The Indian National Government will declare its determination to fight the Axis Powers and it will not conclude a separate peace with the enemy.

4. The war policy of India will be in accordance with the policy as determined by the Allied War Councils on which India will be represented.

5. The Commander-in-Chief will remain in charge of the operational control of the war, in India, and will carry out the common policy of the Allied War Councils.

The Indian National Government will be able to raise an Indian Army whose aim will be to help in the maintenance of internal security and also to defend the country against foreign aggression.

6. The National Government will be composite in character and will include representatives of important parties and groups in the country. It will set up provincial governments also on a similar basis.

7. The membership of the Central and Provincial Cabinets will not be confined to Members of the Legislature but may include outsiders who may wield influence in the country and may be of special assistance during the period of the war.

8. The Indian National Government will concentrate on an active policy of industralisation and economic uplift of India so that India may effectively prosecute the war.

9. The India Office will be abolished.

10. As regards the future Constitution, the Indian National Government in due course will take necessary steps for the formation of a Constituent Assembly for the purpose. There will be a treaty between Great Britain and India which will specially deal with minority rights. In any case, any minority will have the right to refer any proposal regarding the future Constitution to the arbitration of an International Tribunal, in case it considers such a step to be necessary for the protection of its just rights. The decision of such a Tribunal will be binding on the Indian Government and on the minority concerned.

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You, as the representative of the British Crown, should be authorised to deal with the Indian problem with a definite mandate from the British Government. I have indicated above a brief outline of the fundamental points on the basis of which an Indo-British settlement is possible. Other proposals may also be made. But the principal factor is that the British Government must make up its mind to transfer power before negotiations can at all be started.

Let me briefly anticipate what may be the consequences of such an offer. You will release the Congress leaders and ask for a truce from every side. The offer will indeed be one of the finest gestures that any human race occupying the position of rulers over a vast territory like India has made. But this is exactly in accordance with the ideal for which the Allied Powers have grouped together and have plunged the whole world into a veritable blood-bath. If the parties come to an agreement, the solution is immediately made and an awakened India bestirs herself with gigantic schemes of preparation for maintaining her freedom and also that of the Allied Powers. It is extremely doubtful if any party will venture to take up an obstructive attitude. You, on your part, must be prepared to hand over power to those who are willing to accept it and shoulder responsibility. Once it is known that you have made up your mind to transfer power and you will not tolerate any particular party—however big and powerful—to obstruct, natural prudence and self-interest will dictate to each party the immediate necessity for coming to a settlement and accepting the offer. The non-co-operating party immediately loses its artificial power of veto. If it does obstruct and non-co-operates, it places itself automatically in the background when the Indian National Government takes up the reins of power, and starts in its new career of service to the cause of Indian progress with the goodwill of Great Britain and the Allied Powers. Indian opinion will not then hesitate to brand the activities of an obstructionist as inimical to the cause of India. If that party has then to be fought out of existence or suppressed by reason of its unlawful activities or pro-enemy tendencies, the responsibility for doing so will not

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rest with you or the British Government but with the Indian National Government itself. The conditional precedent must of course be that such a Government is clothed with that freedom which is the birthright of India, a freedom which, in consideration of the present crisis, has to be enjoyed by us in full collaboration with other nations pledged to the cause of progress, liberty and democracy.

Public opinion in India demands today that the British Government cannot sit idle and merely rule over India with British bayonets. If you are anxious to save India and the cause of the Allied Powers, you must make a gesture, and no gesture will satisfy India today other than one that will mean a transfer of power to our hands for fighting for the freedom of our motherland. Please forget not that much as every Indian would like to feel that the enemy is bound to be routed, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that the enemy may win, and then indeed begins a new career of slavery for the whole of India. If the worst comes to happen, the British will then withdraw from India and there will be a collapse of your administration. Even the Secretary of State with all his anxiety for the welfare of the teeming millions of India's population will not come to rescue us from Japanese bayonets which already rule over Burma today.

On the other hand, you have declared that you will withdraw from this country after the war and acknowledge India's independence. We feel that for the very purpose of fulfilling your declaration and for winning a war, which is as much yours as it is ours, a recognition of India's free status is essential even during the war. But no sensible Indian would support a proposal that there should be a physical withdrawal of all Britishers from India during this critical period. We have to fight a common enemy with all our joint resources. What we want is a broad-based adjustment between India and Britain during the interim period—an Indian National Government ruling over a free India, acting in a spirit of unity and co-operation with Britain and the Allied Powers, to contribute her humble share to the cause of preservation of world freedom. The Cripps Mission failed, as it had practically nothing to offer us immediately, and

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also for other reasons which I need not enter into. At best it gave us a post-dated cheque on a bank whose future status was not wholly stable. Only a free India, along with the Allied Powers, can save India and the rest of the world.

I have intimated to the Governor of Bengal that I disapprove of the policy that has been launched by the British Government and their representatives at the present juncture. I am making this appeal to you in the hope that you will not allow false prestige to stand in the way but take immediate action for solving the deadlock. In case, however, you feel that the British Government should not move further but allow the present impasse to continue, I must regretfully ask my Governor to relieve me of my duties as minister, so that I may have full freedom to help to mobilise public opinion in demanding a settlement. I earnestly hope that both sides will cry a halt even at this last stage and all parties will do everything that is possible to arrive at a settlement which will be honourable to all and will help us to win the war that aims at crushing the finest fruits of human civilisation. May you, as the representative of the British Crown in India, rise equal to the occasion and contribute your worthy share in solving the deadlock.

As my letter represents the viewpoint of a large section of Indians, including many who have worked in co-operation with the British authority in India, I request you to forward my letter to the British Prime Minister, Sir Stafford Cripps, and the Secretary of State for India, so that, whatever the British Government may do, it may appreciate our attitude towards the present crisis.

Yours sincerely.
Syama Prasad Mookerjee

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Appendix IV

Letter to His Excellency Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal.

16th November, 1942

Dear Sir John,

I hereby resign from my office as a minister.

I have addressed another letter to you today explaining in detail the circumstances which compel me to take this step. This letter is being sent to you through the Chief Minister.

Yours sincerely,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

Letter to The Hon. Mr A. K. Fazlul Haq, Chief Minister of Bengal

16th November, 1942

My Dear Chief Minister,

I have addressed a long letter to the Governor today, copy of which I enclose. This will explain to you the circumstances, beyond your control and mine, which compel me to resign.

A formal letter of resignation addressed to the Governor is sent herewith. Please forward it to him.

Whatever may happen in future, I hope you and I will be able to work together for the protection of popular rights and for maintaining a healthy communal atmosphere in the province.

I am indeed grateful to you for all the confidence you have shown me during the last one year.

Yours sincerely,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee

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Letter to His Excellency Sir John Herbert, Governor of Bengal.

16th November, 1942

Dear Sir John,

I have decided to resign from my office as minister. My formal letter of resignation is being sent to you through the Chief Minister. A copy of my letter to him is enclosed. In this letter I propose to place on record the main events which have led me to take this step. When I accepted office nearly a year ago I was fully aware of the difficulties of the task I was undertaking. The province was then surcharged with communal tension almost unprecedented in its history. The war situation was also fast developing into serious proportions and the problem of strengthening the defence of the country was certainly one that required the combined co-operation of Government and the people. I have striven during the period of my office to maintain a healthy communal atmosphere, believing as I do that this province can never advance unless the two great communities comprised within it feel that its administration is being carried on in a fair and just manner. I have also maintained that in the interest of India herself, our national war efforts must be strengthened and vitalised. I have not however always seen eye to eye with you in regard to the manner and method of mobilising public opinion in favour of the country's defence.

I shall not recapitulate all the matters I had discussed in my letters to you in March and July last, and also in my letter to the Viceroy on 12th August last. They are to be read along with this letter in order to appreciate how I have tried over and again to persuade Government to change its present barren policy, but failed to produce any tangible results.

Broadly speaking, my reasons for resignation are twofold. First, as I intimated to you at the earliest opportunity on 9th August last, I disapprove of the policy adopted by the British Government and the Government of India with regard to the present political situation in the country. I am aware that you, as

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a Provincial Governor, have hardly any responsibility for the formulation of this policy. But my second reason mainly concerns you. And that is connected with the manner, in my opinion unwarranted, in which you have interfered with the work of the ministry and have rendered so-called provincial autonomy into a meaningless farce. Although you could not be held responsible for any all-India decisions, you might have risen to the full height of statesmanship, and by pursuing a bold and straightforward policy of trust and co-operation, changed the tone of the administration in Bengal, leading to a wholesome relaxation of the political situation and ensuring the safety of a province which is now one of the north-eastern war frontiers in India.

Let me refer briefly to the general political situation in the country. My letter to the Viceroy fully explains my viewpoint. But I should record here the extraordinary manner in which you acted when you received information of the policy as determined by the Government of India regarding the threatened Congress movement. When the letter from the Government of India came to the Chief Secretary, you showed it to and discussed it with the Chief Minister who rightly suggested that the policy enunciated by the Government of India on so important a subject should be fully discussed by the Cabinet. You deliberately rejected this advice and even asked the Chief Minister to keep back the contents of the letter from his colleagues, although some permanent officials saw it and recorded their plans for giving effect to the directions. You decided that the Cabinet would consider the letter only after information had been received from the Government of India that effect had actually been given to the policy formulated by it, following the arrest of the Congress leaders. Consultation at this stage was utterly useless as it gave no opportunity to the Cabinet to record its views and communicate them for the effective consideration of the Government of India.

When on 9th August, after the arrest of the Congress leaders at Bombay, you called us together and asked us either to accept the policy or to resign, I pointed out to you that your action was extraordinary and brought provincial autonomy to a state of

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ridicule. You expected ministers to stand by you on the basis of collective responsibility, but declined to trust them and consult them on such a vital matter except at the very last moment when consultation was indeed fruitless. On that day I intimated to you that I disapproved of the policy of the Government of India, as I felt strongly that every effort should be made by the British Government and its representatives in India to secure an honourable and peaceful solution of the Indian problem rather than that it should attempt to overawe the country by a ruthless policy of repression during the period of war. I did not resign at that time as I told you that I was going to write to the Viceroy on the subject. That letter was sent through you on 12th August and I received his reply early in September after my return from Delhi. I believe my letter has been forwarded to the British Government but it is clear that there is no desire whatsoever on the part of Government to bring the present impassé to an end. I bad not in the meantime sat idle but had humbly attempted to organise public opinion in favour of an immediate settlement. Large sections of representative opinion in the country did openly approve of the steps that I along with others had taken. I got into touch with all the important political parties, except the Congress, and when I asked for permission to interview Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders, my request was rejected by the Viceroy.

I have all along felt that the principal reponsibility for settling the present deadlock must rest with Government. The deadlock will not be solved until and unless Government makes up its mind to transfer power to Indians. Immediate establishment of a composite National Government at the Centre and in the provinces, enjoying real power and pursuing an all out defence policy, co-ordinated with the general war policy of the Allied Powers, is essential as much for India's welfare as for that of the Allied Powers themselves. We want to regard ourselves just as free to mould our destinies as Englishmen would like to feel in the land of their birth. Lack of Indian unity is a false plea put forward by British spokesmen. No political advance in the past was made conditional upon complete unity within India. If British Government decides to transfer real power and not play

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the old game of 'divide and rule', the parties must unite in their own interests. Those who do not unite, in spite of real transfer of power, will automatically fall in the background. The fact is that the British Government wishes to hold India under its sway at any cost. The demand of India is simple and straightforward. A slave cannot fight whole-heartedly for any noble cause. India wants that she should be a free country and she should fight along with other free nations for the liberation of humanity against the onslaught of Axis Powers. You have enjoyed freedom in your own country for too long a period to realise fully what it means to be a subject-race that feels oppressed and downtrodden. The tragedy of it all is that at this critical hour when large territories under British Rule in the East have been snatched out of its control mainly on account of its failure to fill the minds of their native people with a burning zeal for maintaining their integrity—one must have freedom before one can die for it—it should even now persist in following the same mistaken policy with regard to the Indian people.

If it is a crime to aspire to see one's country free and shake off foreign domination, including British, every self-respecting Indian is a criminal. There are administrators in India who dream constantly of fifth columnists walking on the roads and lanes of Indian towns and villages. These estimable gentlemen themselves belong to this category, if treachery to India's genuine interests is the real criterion of a fifth columnist in India. The great bulk of the Indian people can have possibly no sympathy with Japan or with any other Axis Power. Why should we Indians be at all anxious to invite Japan to this country ? We want you to return to your own home safely and as speedily as possible, and does it stand to reason that we would welcome a new master with fresh vigour and unsatisfied lust for widespread possession ? We want to be rid of alien rule altogether. We want this country to belong to and to be governed by ourselves. India has for a long time allowed herself to be sacrificed at the altar of Imperial greed. The doctrine of benevolent trusteeship stands exploded and you can no more throw dust into our eyes. Indian

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representatives therefore demand that the policy of administration of their country in all spheres, political, economic and cultural, must be determined by Indians themselves, unfettered by irritating acts of unsympathetic bureaucrats and bungling Governors. There was however ample room for mutual help and trust between England and India for, after all, it is a common menace that threatens both today. We recognise that the war must for the present absorb our whole attention, but only with a free and willing partnership between India on the one hand, and England and other Allied Nations on the other, could we have fittingly organised ourselves for keeping the enemy out of our own country and saving the cause of the Allied Nations themselves. The British Government has failed to realise that India cannot be roused to a passionate fervour and devoted activity, such as witnessed in Russia and China, unless Indians feel that they are free men and their freedom is to be saved, no matter at what sacrifice.

These are natural sentiments fully consistent with the declared war aims of the Allied Nations. If you are sincere in your assertion that you are anxious for a new world-order and want to see that the cause of human freedom is never again imperilled, why should you hesitate to do a little act of self-abnegation by acknowledging India's freedom and thus save yourselves from being branded as guilty of hypocrisy ? Instead of doing what is just and natural, for three months Government has carried on a reign of repression, which will serve as a good model to those deeply attached to totalitarian rules of conduct and whose alleged misdeeds are widely circulated through British agencies. During these months people have lost their fear of bullets. What can possibly be your next action to hold India in chains ? Today India seethes with discontent and bitterness. It is the easiest thing in the world to fight with a people that are unarmed and defenceless. Some of the British spokesmen have said that India or a section of the country has declared war. If that is their belief, then let arms be provided to Indians and let the fight take place on a basis of equality. The most dangerous symptom today is that people feel so completely frustrated at the turn that events

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have taken that they would welcome any change to get rid of the present tyranny.

It is indeed regrettable that men responsible for Indian administration should have forgotten the simple truth that Britain cannot fight India and the Axis Powers together. On account of sheer bankruptcy of statesmanship, much goodwill and co-operation on the part of Indians have been allowed to flow in the channel of distrust and resentment. Many of the administrators have lost their equilibrium and cannot hide their animosity towards Indians as a class. I am not suggesting that many of the senseless acts of outrage and sabotage committed during the last three months will help us to obtain our country's freedom. Let lawlessness be checked. But that is not the only problem. Violence and counter-violence have moved in a vicious circle and vitiated the atmosphere of the country today. You have failed to go to the root cause of the Indian unrest. It is the hunger of liberty that is to be satisfied if peace is to reign in India again. Mere suppression of external manifestations of disorder by force, or worse still, a deliberate policy of terrorism, without any attempt to move along constructive lines to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of India only widens the gulf of difference between Britain and India and is hardly of any good to either country or to the cause of world-freedom. India cannot be held against her will merely on the point of a bayonet. Notes of warning are being sounded by well-meaning Britishers in their own country and here, and also by influential sections of public opinion in America and China. But a false sense of power, prestige and possession chokes the voice of reason and justice.

I wish I could have closed my letter at this point and had not to refer to your own administration which has also contributed in no small measure to the worsening of the situation. In my letter to you written in July last I had given an idea of my feelings of dissatisfaction and disappointment at the manner in which I had seen you administer the affairs of this province. With much apparent goodwill you have bungled stage after stage. For the first time, since the Reforms of 1919, Bengal had a ministry enjoying the support of large sections of Hindus and Muslims.

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Parties and persons who were violently opposed to each other on political and communal considerations had agreed to stand on a common platform for the good of the people specially during the period of war. There are certain people occupying high positions in this country and also abroad, who for obvious reasons do not like a strong combination of Hindu and Muslim elements. The co-operation offered by us was not responded to by you and a certain section of permanent officials. I regret to say that from the very beginning of our association with you, you have failed to rise to that impartial height of a Provincial Governor, which could have given you courage and foresight to respect the Constitution, establish new conventions and broaden the base of the provincial administration so as to win the affection and confidence of the people. You have all along permitted yourself to be guided by a section of permanent officials—loyal die-hards, according to you; short-sighted and reactionary, according to us; resulting in the establishment of a government within a government which has proved disastrous to the interests of the province.

I shall not go into details. But let me remind you that you showed no sympathy whenever proposals for the recognition of the people's rights in various fields of activity were made. They were turned down by you because of deep-rooted distrust and suspicion. Our proposal for raising a Bengal Army was not acceptable to you for reasons which would not even bear scrutiny. This alone would have revolutionised public opinion in Bengal. The scheme for popularising the Home Guard was rejected by you in spite of unanimous advice of all the ministers, simply because you and your officials were afraid of trusting the people. You have systematically resisted the appointment of Parliamentary Secretaries, and the expansion of Cabinet, just to embarrass the ministry. Even before the Congress started any movement, you declined to give back to thousands of Bengalis their freedom which had been denied to them on suspicion or for participation in political movements, although we were prepared to take full responsibility for their future behaviour and activities consistent with the war situation. Recommendations for

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individual releases or even for temporary relaxation were turned down by you, utterly oblivious of any assurance given by us. In matters relating to the Denial Policy you failed to realise the untold suffering into which thousands of people would be thrown, and the discontent that was bound to follow; and only after a good deal of effort could that policy be only slightly modified. We do not yet know what plans have been kept ready for destruction of plants, machinery and other properties in case of enemy invasion. Even in matters relating to supply of food and control of supplies you have interfered with ministerial action and have rendered our task extremely embarrassing. You have discouraged the growth of collective responsibility among ministers while taking momentous decisions on vital issues. Ministerial advice has been brushed aside in regard to selection and posting of officers, while your unabashed softness for the present Opposition Party is in marked contrast to the treatment we used to receive in a similar capacity when the last ministry was in office. Even with regard to a simple question like prorogation of the last session of the Assembly, you have declined to accept our advice. Indeed I did not even receive a reply from you to my letter written early in October, pointing out how the province had to incur wasteful and avoidable expenditure due to your decision not to prorogue the Assembly, simply to harass the ministry. In matters affecting the rights and liberties of the people you have constituted yourself into an appellate authority and you claim to act in exercise of your special powers under Government of India Act. I have repeatedly told you that this is an absurd situation. During the war you can function with success only if you regard yourself as primarily responsible to the people of this province and act on the advice of their chosen representatives. But you have regarded yourself as one who is beyond anybody's control, enjoying powers without being required to give account to any other authority. You have expressed your annoyance from time to time, that ministers are not more active in rousing public opinion in respect of matters relating to war or the general political situation. You will not allow ministers to function and administer according to their

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own light and judgment. You and some of your officers will commit Government to policies and acts which ministers do not approve of and afterwards you expect them to stand up as obedient persons fully justifying the results of your mistaken policy. The brunt of the attack falls on ministers. The Legislature is even precluded from criticising or commenting on your conduct. You in your turn do not hesitate to take advantage of, and sometimes even go beyond the spirit of the provisions of the Government of India Act and the Instrument of Instructions, thus reducing ministerial administration to a mockery.

But the most difficult situation has been created with regard to the manner of suppression of the political movement. I have told you repeatedly that while it is the duty of any Government to see that acts of lawlessness are not committed or that disturbances are not created specially during this grave emergency, Government must not in any manner provoke a crisis or encourage or make it possible for officers to commit excesses or to inflict injury on innocent people. Where persons deliberately commit offences, they must face the consequences of the law. But in spite of our best efforts, indiscriminate arrests have been made, innocent persons assaulted and shot down, and oppression has been carried on in some parts in a manner hardly creditable to any civilized Government. The fact that some British prisoners of war under German control were put under fetters, roused the loud and angry protests of the British Government and its supporters. Can you not express even a fraction of that moral indignation for similar and even worse outrages committed on Indians by the agents of the British Government itself? You have persistently refused to have allegations enquired into and have also helped in the suppression of publication of accurate news.

The political movement took a grave turn in some parts of Midnapore and none can say anything in respect of any legitimate measures taken to deal with persons guilty of serious offences against the law. But in Midnapore repression has been carried on in a manner which resembles the activities of Germans in occupied territories as advertised by British agencies.

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Hundreds of houses have been burnt down by the police and the armed forces. Reports of outrages on women have reached us. Muslims have been instigated to loot and plunder Hindu houses; or the protectors of law and order have themselves carried on similar operations. Orders were issued from Calcutta that it was not the policy of the Government that houses should be burnt by persons in charge of law and order. I have ample evidence to show that this order was not carried into effect, and even after the unprecedented havoc caused by the cyclone on 16th October and our visit to the affected areas a fortnight later, the burning of houses and looting were continued in some parts of the district. Apart from the manner in which people were fired at and killed, these acts of outrage committed by Government agencies are abominable in character. Let us condemn, by all means, acts of lawlessness perpetrated by volunteers. To my knowledge they did not take the life of any Government servant. In any case the wrongs perpetrated by breakers of law and order are no justification whatsoever for the upholders of law and order to terrorise innocent people and to oppress one and all in a ruthless manner.

The reports which I have received about the callousness and indifference of some of the officers even after the cyclone perhaps find no parallel in the annals of civilized administration. The suppression of news of the havoc by Government, and even of appeals for help for more than a fortnight, was criminal. In the presence of the District Magistrate, complaints were received that boats were not made available on that fateful evening or even later to save the lives of the people who were perilously resting for a brief while on the roofs of their houses that ultimately collapsed. One gentleman gave a harrowing description of the manner in which he and others begged of officers to allow a boat found by them to ply for a couple of hours in order to rescue some men, women and children lying near the area concerned. This request was summarily rejected and the men who had used the boat were threatened with dire consequences. Later on, all the people whom this party wanted to rescue were washed away, never to be found again. After the cyclone, curfew

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orders are continuing even in areas where people offered every co-operation. Our intervention in this respect proved fruitless. Transport facilities and movements were extremely restricted even when we visited the district a fortnight later. Cows were requisitioned under the Defence of India Rules. The total destruction of cattle owing to flood and storm would be somewhere between seventy-five and eighty-five per cent. Of the cows that remained, although they were giving milk and some were with calf, a good many were snatched away from private houses by the police and the military for the purpose of feeding the troops. Such inhuman callousness is indeed unparalleled. One officer's report in writing to Government was that relief, whether organised by Government or any private agency, should be withheld for a month and thereby people taught a permanent lesson. Relief measures adopted by local officers were utterly inadequate. Even bonafide private relief workers from Calcutta though they produced their credentials, found themselves in jail under the Defence of India Rules. There is no chance on our part to get these officers removed from that area because prestige will then suffer. There is no chance of any enquiry being held, although other provincial governments have held enquiries under far less serious circumstances, for then again prestige will suffer. The only chance that people of this province apparently have, is to suffer patiently at the hands of the upholders of law and order, and wait for the day when nemesis is bound to come.

We have been told that there are indications that political agitation is still in progress in some parts of Midnapore. There may have been sporadic outbursts, but from my personal knowledge I can definitely assert that the bulk of the people, including supporters of the Congress, genuinely want peace to be restored immediately. From my talks with many inside and outside the Midnapore Jail I am satisfied that if officers dealt with the situation with tact and sympathy, subversive activities would completely stop and the whole of Midnapore would rise to a man to work wholeheartedly with Government for giving relief. It is disgusting, how valuable time has been wasted for one month because of the apathetic and dilatory attitude of some of

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the local officers on the one hand, and the strange obstructiveness of some of the representatives of the department of law and order in Calcutta on the other. Meanwhile thousands are suffering for want of food, shelter, medicine, clothing and drinking water. The present methods of persecution and slow action are both cruel and fatal and they will not die out nor the atmosphere improve until some officers are transferred from the district. Ministers feel that both, for the correct maintenance of law and order, and for the sake of suffering humanity, this should be done immediately, but they are powerless to give effect to it. You too declined to accept our advice in this respect. Could you not as Governor, issue in time a public message of sympathy—the Viceroy could do it—for the unprecedented loss following the flood and cyclone, costing the lives of at least thirty thousand people and colossal destruction of cattle and property, a havoc which British troops describe as similar to the worst ravages that may be caused by enemy bombing ? Let an impartial enquiry be conducted into the affairs of Midnapore and the correct version on both sides see the light of the day. Will you have the courage to agree to this ?

The manner in which collective fines have been imposed by Government throughout the province deserves severe condemnation. The scheme of imposition of collective fines on Hindus alone, irrespective of their guilt, has been an all-India feature and is a British revival of the ancient policy of *Jizia* for which Aurangzeb made himself famous. In Bengal, the Chief Minister had been averse to the imposition of such fines and tried again and again to lay down certain principles which were unimpeachable from the point of view of elementary justice. You have interfered with the Chief Minister's decision and have prevented him from giving effect to these directions. Amounts have been imposed in many cases without any regard to the total damage caused or to the part played by the inhabitants concerned. In at least one case I know the Collector was not even consulted; in some others, local officers were invited by Government itself to propose the imposition of fines. I have carefully examined the papers with regard to a number of these cases and the

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monstrosity of the imposition has staggered me. I challenge you to place the materials on which decisions have been taken before any impartial judge, and I have not the least doubt that in most cases the verdict will be that the fines are not at all leviable in accordance with the provisions of the Ordinance, or that the discrimination made is completely unjustifiable, or that the amounts fixed are entirely disproportionate in character. Fines have been imposed in many cases without the Chief Minister knowing what was being done. Only recently, it was suggested by the Chief Minister that the realisation might be delayed by a fortnight and the entire policy considered at a Cabinet meeting. Your answer to this request, which was made on behalf of us all, was in full conformity with the traditions which you had already established. You had no objection to a Cabinet meeting being held. But you indicated beforehand with sufficient clearness, but with unbecoming impropriety and discourtesy to ministers, that you would in any case pass orders in exercise of your individual judgment for the immediate collection of the fines.

It is amazing how in every matter concerning the rights and liberties of the people or where racial considerations were likely to arise, you have acted with singular indifference to the genuine interests of the people of this province. A difficult and tense situation, such as the present, might have been eased by a policy of administration actuated by sympathy, understanding and goodwill. Irresponsible possession of power by persons without a high degree of administrative ability, ignorant of the Indian mind and conditions, and blindly guided by unsympathetic bureaucrats, leads to disastrous consequences during the period of war. If ever a time comes when an impartial stock is taken of what you and others did, and omitted to do, the verdict will be that at a critical hour you hopelessly failed to serve a province of great strategic importance, although, if correctly approached, its people were capable of being roused to an intense patriotic fervour and would have readily agreed to face any sacrifice and suffering for saving their own country from the impending invasion of the enemy. What you and others have done has only helped the enemy who cares not for our future. Whatever

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happens, it is we, the people of the land, who will suffer as much at the hands of our so-called protectors as of the avowed destroyers. Military matters are kept dead secret from us. We still hope Bengal and India will be successfully defended. But if the worst happens, you and others, who now feel overpowered by special responsibilities, will, like your friends similarly situated in Burma, desert the province, we remaining here, unarmed, unprepared and emasculated, to face your parting bullets and the yet unknown operations of the Denial Policy on the one hand, and the oppression of the invading enemy on the other. And yet with goodwill and statesmanship on your side, to which the great bulk of Indians would have warmly responded, what a bulwark a Free India and the Allied Nations would jointly have been against the combined forces of the Axis Powers!

I am sorry that our official association should end like this at this critical hour in the history of my province. I honestly feel I can be of no use to my countrymen or to you by remaining in office so long as the general all-India policy remains what it is and the province is administered by you on lines which I consider inimical to its best interest.

I shall release this letter, as also the previous letters I wrote to you in March and July last, as soon as my resignation is accepted. May I publish your reply to my July letter? I also propose to publish simultaneously my letter to the Viceroy sent on 12th August. Will you please ascertain if I may publish his reply to my letter? All these letters deal with matters of far-reaching importance to the public in India and abroad, specially at this critical juncture in the history of our country.

Yours sincerely,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee

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Appendix V

WHY I RESIGNED

Statement of Dr Syama Prasad Mookerjee before the Bengal Legislative Assembly on 12 February, 1943

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I with your permission make a statement on the opening day of the Legislative Assembly dealing with the circumstances which led to my resignation as a minister. It is all the more necessary that I should do so, since my resignation has not been due to any want of confidence in me either by the House or the party to which I have the honour to belong. In fact, it has not been due also to any difference of opinion either with the Chief Minister or any of my colleagues on any question of public importance. As members of the House are aware, I felt compelled to resign, first, because I found that the continued policy of the British Government and the Government in this country was to ignore the claims of Indians to fuller political power, to hamper good government consistent with the true interests of the people and to weaken the forces of people's defence against enemy aggression. It is not my intention to reiterate the points which I had mentioned in my letter of resignation to the Governor dealing with the all-India political situation. That letter, along with several other documents, true to the Hitlerian traditions of the government of this province, today form part of proscribed literature. A minister's accusation of autocratic misrule need not be replied to with facts and figures, but must be suppressed under arbitrary rules—what grander conception could the British authorities hold before us of responsible government in this country?

Suffice it to say that I definitely regard the authorities as responsible for the present deadlock in India. The Indian public on the whole can possibly have no sympathy with any foreign aggressor. The reason is simple and straightforward. We do not want a change of masters. We would like to see our country attain as speedily as possible that political status which is its

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birthright. There in no sense in our asking to be rid of British control if we simultaneously wish to place ourselves under a fresh foreign yoke. The deadlock however suits the reactionary elements that dominate over the Indian administration and it is manifest that the British Government has no desire to part with power in India. Excuse after excuse is trotted out for holding India under its heels against the will of her people. Whatever British protagonists may say, Government stands unmasked as regards its attitude towards India. Indeed, in this respect, we see no difference between its greed and the greed of the Axis Powers to control and dominate over weaker territories for their own selfish ends. The reign of repression that we have witnessed in India since August last has been directed not only against a so-called subversive movement, but against every form of nationalist activities calculated to mobilise the will-power of Indians to throw off a foreign rule that they intensely dislike. As our British friends from a high moral altitude sometimes rebuke Hitler, so let us remind our masters that the history of all oppressed countries has for ever shown that the greater the repression by the oppressor, the more intense is the urge of the oppressed to unite and struggle for their rights. Sufferings of unarmed people at the hands of armed oppressors only elevate the former and bring the latter into contempt before the bar of world opinion. They may for a time overawe the sufferers. But hatred and bitterness deepen, and reaction comes sooner than the upholders of the rule of 'might is right' very often imagine, which completely uproots the loose and shaky foundation on which their government rests.

It was not however merely on this all-India policy and its repercussions in Bengal that I felt compelled to resign, but there were other circumstances which rendered it impossible for me to continue in office, consistent with my self-respect. For the first time in the history of this province, representatives of large sections of Hindus, Muslims and other communities combined to work the provincial constitution. I do not ignore that the opposition today represents a considerable section of Muslim opinion in Bengal, and to me personally nothing would be of

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greater satisfaction than to see a combination of all the Indian elements in the legislature, on the basis of a common programme, to fight for the rights of the people in this critical period of the history of Bengal. In any case, even the combination that we had formed under the leadership of Mr A. K. Fazlul Haq proved something too bitter to be swallowed by a section of permanent officials in this province and by no less a person than the head of the provincial administration himself. British rule thrives in the eyes of the outer world on constant strifes between Hindus and Muslims, and even a partial unity on the part of members belonging to these two great communities served as a nightmare to those bureaucrats who held in their hands the real powers of administration.

Let me at this stage briefly refer to the fundamental features of the constitution that governs the administration of the province. Indian ministers are trotted out as Mr Amery's showboys when foreign public opinion is to be soothed as regards the grand appearance of provincial autonomy in India. The world is reminded that the destinies of millions of Indians are in the hands of Indian ministers responsible to the legislature. The true fact however is that while ministers have large responsibilities and have to justify the conduct and administrative acts of themselves and of irresponsible bureaucrats before the legislature and the public, they have very little of real power, which lies vested in the autocratic hands of the Governor of the province concerned. And the Governor has at his beck and call the services of a small coterie of unsympathetic and unimaginative civil servants, utterly oblivious of the real interests of the people of the province. Apart from important sections of the Government of India Act which entitle the Governor to act in his discretion or in the exercise of his individual judgment, Section 52 clothes him with special responsibilities which can be utilised by a reactionary Governor, acting in close association with his chosen officers, in a manner highly detrimental to the interests of the people. And if I may pause here for a moment and ask what guarantee there is that an Indian province will get a Governor who has the capacity, the integrity and the willingness

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to act as a constitutional head, ever ready to establish healthy conventions, broadening the base of the constitution, and not as an arbitrary dictator or as an interfering busybody, the answer is that the guarantee is nil. If I ask again what protection the people of an Indian province have to save themselves from the clutches of a Governor and his happy family of selected civil servants, the answer is that the protection is nil. It is common knowledge that a Governor of an Indian province is selected not always on the ground of merit, or breadth of outlook, but very often for personal considerations and political patronage. Thus a man who by reason of his administrative and personal qualities may not even be competent to become a head clerk in Clive Street or who by reason of his capacity for carrying on intrigues and setting one against the other may at best adorn a modest chair in Elysium Row, finds himself raised to the giddy heights of Governorship of an Indian province. Shielded as he is from public criticism, forgetful of his own obvious limitations, he is encouraged to do acts behind the scene which render him positively dangerous to the peace and tranquillity of the province under his charge.

During my experience as a minister I found to my utter surprise, that in many vital matters affecting the rights and liberty of the people, the advice tendered by the ministers was invariably subject to revision in the light of the counsel tendered by the more trusted members of the services whose omnicompetence was almost of a divine character. Let me make it clear beyond dispute that I do not charge public servants, as a class, with having failed to respect the spirit of provincial autonomy in this province. I know of officers, British and Indian, whose services have been of inestimable value to the province. My charge is directed against a coterie of officials forming the Fourth Estate or the Real Estate, who today exercise a malign influence over the affairs of the province, and according to the language of the Defence of India Rules, are dangerous men. I cannot possibly discuss all the details of the provincial administration in respect of which the farcical state of a Government within a Government has been the main characteristic. But such matters related not

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only to the department of law and order but also to other departments. The keynote of the policy of interference was that people of the land were not to be trusted, and power, whenever possible, must remain in the hands of chosen British officials enjoying the confidence of the Governor and his coterie.

In the matter of release of political prisoners, the ministers were anxious to pursue a policy which while fully consistent with the present war emergency would at the same time help to mobilise public opinion of all shades in favour of the defence of the province against Axis aggression. Whether the recommendations affected the general state policy or individual cases, systematic obstruction came from the permanent officials, whom ministers could not remove, ultimately backed by the support of the head of the provincial administration. The revised scheme of Home Guards approved by the Council of Ministers, calculated to lay the foundation of a people's army, irrespective of caste, community, or politics, was summarily rejected by the Governor inasmuch as the stalwarts of the department of law and order were not prepared to trust Bengalis to unite in the defence of their own motherland or in maintaining internal security. The present situation regarding food and supply of essential commodities has taken an acute turn. But here also the interfering hands of the Governor and the policy of his own selected officials whom the ministry was bound to accept, whether it liked them or not, have been mainly responsible for the lack of co-ordination and for the failure to draw up a comprehensive scheme for the relief of the people at large.

When the political disturbances due to the Congress decision in August had not broken out, the policy of combating the movement was outlined by the Government of India, and such is the nature of the responsible Government functioning in this unfortunate land that, that communication was not allowed to be placed before the Council of Ministers in spite of repeated demands made by the Chief Minister himself. A coterie of public servants could however see this document and they were ready with plans and proposals. But ministers were allowed access to it only after the policy had been given effect to by the Government

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of India on 9th August last. In the matter of appointments, an Indian Civil Servant, who was a Bengali, could easily be superseded by the decision of the Governor in spite of ministerial advice, on the plea that all appointments and transfers were to be made by the Governor acting in his own discretion under the Government of India Act. One may stop here and ask, 'is that discretion intended to be exercised only in favour of protecting the vested interests of chosen officers, or the interest of members belonging to the Governor's own community ?' Another British Civil Servant had the audacity to put down in writing that the rates of payments made to the unfortunate evacuees of eastern Bengal were much higher than what they deserved and as an 'Imperial officer'—the words are not mine but his (and who will dare say after this that Imperialism will ever die on the soil of India)—he refused to carry out the orders of the provincial government. This officer still remains in power and enjoys a position of great trust and responsibility. Cases of oppression have taken place and there has been a singular obstinacy, on the part of the same coterie I have mentioned, to resist any enquiry into such allegations. A Bengali officer enjoying a comparatively subordinate status had the courage to complain about the high-handedness of the military in some area in eastern Bengal and the wrath of the coterie fell on him and he was ordered a summary transfer. When higher officials oppressed the people, and transfer and enquiry were demanded, prestige stood in the way and truth and justice had to be sacrificed at its altar. This state of demoralisation and open defiance of elementary canons of discipline are due to the support that the coterie expects to get over the head of the ministers themselves. Intimate consultation between Government House and the Secretariat, behind the back of ministers, was a regular feature and very often the files themselves bore the evidence of carefully prepared designs for thwarting popular demands.

The history of imposition of collective fines is another chapter of deliberate violation of justice and fairplay. My comments on this matter were distorted in some quarters. The Hindus were singled out for mass punishment in respect of collective fines. I

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never suggested for a moment that the remedy was the inclusion of Muslims as a whole. My claim has been, and is today, that fines should be imposed only on persons who can be held to be guilty according to the provisions of the Ordinance. There should be no imposition based on communal considerations. Just as innocent Muslims should be excluded, so also innocent Hindus should be excluded, unless the policy of Government is to terrorise the Hindus as a community. We as ministers asked for the whole policy being reconsidered by Cabinet and demanded a correct application of the Ordinance in suitable cases. Would it surprise the Legislative Assembly to know that while the Governor was willing to have the matter considered by Cabinet, he informed the ministers without any ambiguity that whatever Cabinet might decide, fines already imposed must be collected and the policy already adopted must continue. If necessary, he was prepared to pass orders under his special responsibility.

The House will recall that in course of a recent discussion, the Indian members of the legislature belonging to all groups pressed Government for liberalising the conditions for admission to the Army and for taking steps for organising a national militia which would be charged with the solemn duty of defending our hearth and home. The ministry unanimously advocated the creation of such a militia but there was systematic obstruction from higher quarters. Want of arms and ammunitions, want of trainers, want of time were some of the pleas that were put forward time after time. We were reminded that the task of armed defence might be left in the hands of non-Bengalis and we in our turn could well prepare the minds of the people for putting forward an effective passive resistance should the enemy ever penetrate into our land. The real reason was not a sudden affection for the doctrine of non-violence discovered by British representatives in this province, for England would not rightly agree to follow it in her own case. It was deep-rooted distrust of Bengalis, be they Hindus or Muslims, that justified a deliberate policy of emasculation of the manhood of this land.

The Denial Policy and the schemes for compulsory evacuation for military purposes have caused the greatest possible hardship

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to thousands of poor people in Bengal. The Council of Ministers prepared a unanimous note indicating with sufficient clearness that the Denial Policy, which was the outcome of a theory of defeatism, could easily be avoided consistent with military requirements. That memorandum was not even forwarded to the Government of India and the advice of the ministers, though it ultimately secured some alteration in the detailed application of the policy, could not undo the total mischief which has caused an unprecedented social and economic disaster in many parts of Bengal.

Lastly, let me refer to Midnapore. I do not for a moment ignore that the political disturbances in some parts of this district were of a serious character. One can well understand any legitimate steps taken to combat lawlessness and open defiance of authority. But if a section of the people challenged Government, the local officers were themselves reported to have broken the basic canons of civilised administration and carried on a relentless campaign of repression, irrespective of the guilt of the people concerned. Shooting of innocent people, looting and destruction of property, instigating one community against the other, attacks on women, these were amongst the charges that reached us from various independent sources, many of whom lent no support whatsoever to any subversive movement. Detailed information was handed over to us, including lists of houses that were raided and burnt by or under the direction of the police and the military. I handed over one such long list to some of the highest officials in the Home Department on the very day of the fateful cyclone of 16th October and urged them to see that the barbarous acts complained of came to a stop immediately. Then came the terrible blow from nature on 16th October last. One would have thought this natural catastrophe, which had caused such enormous destruction of life and property, would also serve to wash away all the bitterness and the sore from the minds of the officials and the local public alike and bind them together in a noble determination to alleviate human suffering. The callousness that I witnessed on the part of some of the officials from the highest to the lowest in the face of this

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terrible blow was something unparalleled in the annals of civilised administration. We have been taught to hate Nazi horrors. But the horrors of oppression under British rule that Bengal and India witnessed during the last five months compare very favourably with the reports that British propagandists circulate about Axis tortures in lands under their occupation.

I beg of the House to understand one point in this connection. It is true that some of the officers posted in the district of Midnapore are Muslims ; but my attack has not been against Muslim officers as such. Indeed the number of Hindu officers against whom allegations were made are greater in number ; and what to say of the British officers, specially at the headquarters, whose supreme indifference, if not hostility, was a sad commentary on the low level to which British traditions have sunk in this country. My attack is against the officers as such, irrespective of their politics, or racial or communal attachment.

My first charge about Midnapore is the criminal and deliberate delay in publishing the news of the havoc caused on 16th October. The Defence of India Rules have been misapplied in many directions but a more disgraceful application of these rules has not taken place anywhere in India. The happy family of civil servants suppressed the news for nearly a fortnight. Even appeals for help were not allowed to see the light of the day. The explanation that was given was utterly devoid of justification. The fact remains that most valuable time was thus lost and people suffered and died for want of co-ordinated and organised relief. The District Officer himself failed to rise equal to the occasion and his previous prejudice against the people who were called rebels, prevented him from doing what any responsible officer was bound to do to mitigate the sufferings of the people. Some roads were cleared by him and he took some further action. But his frame of mind was made known to us when he sent his report recommending that in view of the political misdeeds of the people not only should Government withhold relief but it should not permit any non-official organisation to conduct relief in the affected area. Could heartlessness go any further ? The Governor himself after remaining silent for an amazingly long period called

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for the co-operation of all sections of the people for conducting relief operations. But there was repeated obstruction when we attempted to create an atmosphere in this district which would have placed all political controversies into the background and roused the people to a united sense of corporate activity in organising and distributing relief. Three of the ministers including myself were in Midnapore about twelve days after the cyclone. The sufferings of the people that we witnessed were beyond description. Relief was then in a hopeless state of confusion and people were denied the barest facilities for movement and work. We discussed matters with leaders inside and outside the jail. I found that there was a genuine anxiety on the part of all to work together for alleviation of the great suffering that fell on the people of the district. What was wanted was a little bold imagination on the part of Government. After we returned to Calcutta, for two days we discussed the situation with the High Command of the happy coterie at the Secretariat and I felt disgusted at the obstructive and unrealistic attitude of these so-called public servants. The Chief Minister agreed with the policy of help and sympathy that we recommended. But here again, the Governor's interfering hands prevented us from doing what statesmanship and justice both demanded. Not only was the political situation not eased in spite of offer of co-operation of a large number of political prisoners and many people outside the jail, but Government pursued the mad and sinister policy of relief by day, and raid and repression by night. A systematic burning and looting of houses of all conditions of people had gone on unbridled before the cyclone ; even afterwards, I feel ashamed to state, this was pursued in some parts of the district in spite of Government orders to the contrary. I have myself made enquiries and I have in my possession names of persons who were raided, robbed and humiliated before and after the cyclone. Copies of some of the lists I had personally handed over to high officials, but I have never been informed as regards the action taken against the offenders who masqueraded in the garb of upholders of law and order. Indeed allegations of oppression were made by people in our presence and in the presence of local

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officers but we were helpless to give them relief. I shall not discuss this aspect of the question in detail because Midnapore will, I dare say, figure in the debates of this session. I shall end by saying that even about a month ago, reports of raids on villages had reached us and they disclosed most lamentable incidents of rape and outrage of helpless women carried on systematically by the guardians of law and order themselves. I have with me the statement of the sufferers themselves and they constitute a disgrace on the Government of this country. The police would not record their statements and there is none to give them protection against the brutalities committed by the pillars of democracy and liberty. I wrote to the Chief Minister almost immediately after the occurrence and I am waiting to know from him what has been the fate of any enquiry that might have been made into the allegations. Yesterday it was the Muslim women of eastern Bengal who were the victims. Today it is the Hindu women of Midnapore who have shared the same fate. I have often wondered during the last few weeks what would have happened if even one single White woman had been the victim of the lust and cruelty of people supported by the Government of the day. The Press is gagged. Public opinion is muzzled. But this House is yet beyond the jurisdiction of the Defence of India Rules. We should unanimously demand an independent enquiry into all such incidents. Indeed let us know, let the world know the whole truth about Midnapore, not through carefully prepared reports of the culprits themselves or of their supporters, but through the agency of an impartial and independent tribunal who would give the fullest protection to the people who would either complain or depose against officials.

The picture of provincial autonomy that I have given is only illustrative and not exhaustive. The charges I have brought forward are of a severe character and I have done so with a full sense of responsibility. I would much like the personages whose acts and policies I have criticised to come and stand face to face before the legislature, which after all is the only representative body of the people of this province under the existing constitution. Would they dare do it ? Would they even dare meet an

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assembly of its members and justify what they are doing ? They have the supreme advantage of indulging in their designs behind the screen and setting up Hon'ble Ministers before the House to defend them. What the ministers will say or do, I do not know. But I would ask them with all the earnestness at my command that their loyalty to their country demands of them to state categorically how they are being hampered in carrying on a sound administration of the province calculated to advance the welfare of the people.

When we come here as members of the legislature, we seek to reach the goal of our national freedom through the path of constitutional struggle. The history of countries, which still form part of the British Empire but had to wring from unwilling hands the charter of their liberty, affords glorious examples of constitutional struggle and victory. One has to read the histories of Canada and Australia for the purpose of recalling how sharp was the difference between legal power and constitutional right in these dominions and how many a Governor was actually recalled at the instance of the legislature for their flagrant acts of arbitrary dictatorship. Even in England a king had to take his eternal rest when he came into an open clash with the people who favoured their own rights and liberties more than their loyalty to the sovereign. The Government of India Act of 1935 will not indicate the manner and method of fighting for our constitutional rights. The legislatures of India will have to create new usages and conventions, and demand the abrogation of arbitrary rule, even though the perpetrators of misdeeds feel themselves temporarily secure amidst the protecting corridors of Government House and the Bengal Secretariat. After all what is it that we want in this province and country of ours ? We have as much right to throw off the yoke of British domination as England is anxious to save herself from Hitler's profane hands. Are we to be guilty of treason or branded as fifth-columnists if we re-echo President Roosevelt's historic utterance that 'it is much better for a nation to die standing on its feet than to live on its bended knees' ? We claim the liberty to shape the administrative policy of this province in accordance with the real needs of the

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people. We want that the will of the people will be reflected truly and forcibly in the voices of the members of the legislature, and unmindful of all consequences, its members will compel the executive to proceed on lines which are in accordance with national interests. If in the process of so doing, the legislature finds disturbers and obstructionists seated on high pedestals standing in the way, it must fearlessly demand their removal from office. After all we have witnessed how special responsibilities, now lying heavily on high shoulders, were quietly and hurriedly given the go-by in the adjoining territory of Burma, and the grand protectors of that country took to their heels leaving the people of Burma to their fate, and incidentally to Japan. Today there is only one consideration that we shall demand to see fulfilled and that is unswerving loyalty to the interest of the people of the country. If an official, however high, fails to do so, he is the worst Quisling imaginable and he has no place in this province. Let me make this appeal to all sections of this House so that we may unite in our own struggle to uproot tyranny and oppression. We have often fought with each other and thereby not only weakened ourselves but have strengthened those reactionary forces whose very continuance depends on our differences. Today in the crisis that threatens us, not as Hindus or Muslims as such but as Bengalis and Indians, let us demand the inauguration of an administration which will recognise our just economic and political rights. A Hindu and a Muslim may differ on many things, but do they not equally detest slavery—and it is for ending the state of intolerable slavery that I am asking for your support and co-operation.

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Biographical and Descriptive Notes

Abanindra Nath Tagore : Famous artist and litterateur; Chancellor of Visva Bharati, Santiniketan, 1942.

Abdul Karim : minister in the Progressive Coalition Cabinet (1941-43).

Abul Kalam Azad : (1888-1958), Congress leader.

A.D.M. : Additional District Magistrate.

A.G. of Madras : Accountant-General of Madras.

Aga Kazim : Aga Muhammad Kazim Shirazi, lecturer of Arabic and Persian in Calcutta University.

Allabux : Chief Minister of Sind, opposed to Mr Jinnah and the Muslim League

Amery : L.C.M.S. (1873-1955), First Lord of the Admiralty (1922-23); Secretary of State for India (1940-45).

Amrita Bazar Patrika : English daily of Calcutta.

Ananda Bazar Patrika : Bengali daily of Calcutta.

Ananda Mohan Poddar : businessman; elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, 1945.

Anath : Dr Anathnath Chatterjee, Syama Prasad's brother-in-law (youngest sister Romola's husband).

Antu : Debatosh Mookerjee, youngest son of Syama Prasad.

A.R.P : Air Raid Precautions.

Asutosh Hall : of Asutosh Building, Calcutta University.

Asutosh Lahiri : revolutionary patriot; Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Asutosh Museum : of Art, Calcutta University.

Atul Kumar : Congress member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, 1937-46.

Azad Hind Fauj : also known as the Indian National Army or INA, aimed to liberate India from British rule; Subhas Chandra Bose was its leader.

Azizul Haque : *see* V. C.

Babu Padmaraj Jain : Hindu Mahasabha leader, Calcutta.

Badridas Goenka : (Sir) well-known businessman of Calcutta.

Badrudoza : Syed Badrudduja, prominent member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly, (1937-1947).

Bahuballabh Shastri : lecturer, Sanskrit College; family friend.

Baini Prasad : (Dr), eminent zoologist; of Zoological Survey of India.

balaposh : warm wrap made of silk, and quilted with cotton, scented with attar.

Banerjee : *see* Pramatha.

Bankim Mukherjee : Bankim Chandra Mukherjee, advocate; Hindu Mahasabha leader.

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Barada Pain: Barada Prasanna Pain, notable criminal lawyer; minister in the Cabinet of Khwaja Nazimuddin (1943-45).

Barda: Syama Prasad's eldest brother, Rama Prasad.

Barda's father-in-law: Lalit Kumar Chatterjee.

Baridbaran: Baridbaran Mookerjee, personal assistant of Syama Prasad Mookerjee.

bastis: slums.

B.B.De: (Dr) Professor Biman Behari De.

B.C.Chatterjee: Bijoy Chandra Chatterjee, well-known barrister of Calcutta; Hindu Mahasabha leader.

B.C. Roy: Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy (1882-1962), eminent physician; statesman; Congress leader; Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University (1942-44); later, Chief Minister of West Bengal (1948 till his death in 1962).

benamdar: ostensible owner (name lender).

Benu: Pravat Kumar Chatterjee, married Syama Prasad's cousin.

Bhabha: Professor Homi Bhabha (1909-66), FRS; eminent scientist; Chairman of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission; connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Bhai Parmanand: (1874-1947), leader of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Arya Samaj; social reformer.

Bharat: Bengali daily of Calcutta.

Bhatnagar: Sir Santi Swarup Bhatnagar, FRS; scientist and administrator; Director-General of Scientific & Industrial Research, Government of India.

Bholanath Chatterjee: prominent resident of Bhowanipur; family friend.

Bhulabhai Desai: eminent lawyer; Congress leader; member, Central Legislative Assembly (1934-45)

Bidhu Bhusan Sarkar: prominent Councillor of the Calcutta Corporation.

Bijoy Narayan Kundu: zamindar; owner of a large number of houses and property in Madhupur.

Biju: Uma Prasad Mookerjee, third brother of Syama Prasad.

Biraj Babu: Biraj Mohan Majumdar, lawyer, Calcutta High Court; Vice-Principal, Calcutta University Law College.

Biren Roy: President, Bengal Flying Club; Chairman, South Suburban Municipality.

Blair: J.R. Blair, member of the Indian Civil Service; Chief Secretary, Government of Bengal, April 1942.

Blandy: Sir E.N. Blandy, member of the Indian Civil Service; Chief Secretary; retired 1942.

Boudi: Tara Devi, eldest sister-in-law of Syama Prasad; wife of Rama Prasad Mookerjee.

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bouvbhat : wedding reception.

B.P. Singh Roy : Sir Bejoy Prasad Singh Roy, industrialist and land-holder of Bengal; minister in the first Fazlul Haq ministry, (1938-41).

B.R. Sen : Benoy Ranjan Sen, member of the Indian Civil Service, succeeded N.M. Khan as District Magistrate of Midnapore; thereafter Secretary, Revenue Department of Bengal; later Director-General, Food & Agricultural Organization, UNO.

Brahmanberia : sub-division of district of Tippera of undivided Bengal.

B.S. Guha : Dr Biraja Sankar Guha, of Anthroplogical Survey of India; General Secretary, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1940.

Bua : Savita, eldest daughter of Syama Prasad, married to Nishit Ranjan Banerjee.

Bulbul : Sivatosh Mookerjee, Rama Prasad Mookerjee's second son.

Bura : Amala, Syama Prasad's second sister, married to Dr Pramatha Nath Banerjee.

Butan : Mohit Kumar Chatterjee; Rama Prasad's eldest brother-in-law.

C. & W. Department : Communication & Works Department of the Government of Bengal.

Career Lectures : lectures on career guidance, initiated by Syama Prasad in Calcutta University.

Carter : M.O. Carter, member of the Indian Civil Service; Secretary to the Governor of Bengal, 1942.

Chandravarkar : Sir Vithal Narayan Chandravarkar, Vice-Chancellor of Bombay University (1933-39), connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Charu Bhattacharyya : Professor Charu Chandra Bhattacharyya (1883-1961), Professor of Physics, Presidency College.

Charu Biswas : Justice Charu Chandra Biswas, Judge, Calcutta High Court (1937-49); Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University (1949-50), minister of the Union of India (1950-57).

Chiang Kai-shek : (1887-1975), Chinese general and statesman; his nationalist government succeeded in unifying most of China; in the Chinese Civil War, Chiang's forces were worn down until he was forced out.

Chief Minister : Fazlul Haq (q.v.).

Chittaranjan Das : (1870-1925), leading barrister of Calcutta; President of the Indian National Congress, 1922; founded the Swaraj Party, with Motilal Nehru, within the Congress to contest the elections.

Chopra : Brevet Colonel Sir Raman Nath Chopra; member of the Indian Medical Service; Professor, School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta.

Col. Anderson : member of the Indian Medical Service; eminent surgeon.

Commander-in-Chief : Lord Archibald Wavell, (1883-1950); later, First Earl; Commander, Middle East (1939-41); Commander-in-Chief India (1941-1943); Viceroy of India (1943-47).

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communal ratio : reservations of posts for Muslims and Scheduled Castes.

conquering Russia : Cripps went as Britain's Ambassador to the Soviet Union, to Moscow in June 1940, where he negotiated the Mutual Assistance Pact with the Soviet Union in July 1941.

Cripps Scheme : (1942); Sir Stafford Cripps drafted a scheme, the first part of which was to prescribe the procedure for framing the Constitution for the proposed Dominion of India and the second part of the scheme related to immediate and interim arrangements during the Second World War.

Deben Babu : Debendranath Mukherjee, advocate; Hindu Mahasabha leader; Mayor, Calcutta Corporation.

Debi : Debi Prasad Datta, Additional Controller of Examinations, Calcutta University (1947-52).

Denial Policy : a policy in wartime, of large-scale destruction, anticipating retreat from an area so that if the enemy succeeded in coming it would face many difficulties.

Deverandapur : village in the Hooghly district; birthplace of the novelist Sarat Chandra Chatterjee.

Dhawdeo : Hindu Mahasabha leader.

diarchy : system of 'Transferred' and 'Reserved' subjects, of the provincial government in the British provinces, under Government of India Act, 1919.

didibhai : grandaughter, Manju, daughter of Savita.

didimoni : grandmother.

DIR : Defence of India Rules, 1939.

Dr Brahmachari : Sir Upendra Nath Brahmachari (1873-1946), eminent physician and medical researcher.

Dr M. : Capt. Dr Debendra Chandra Majumdar, ex-member of the Indian Medical Service.

Dr Sivapada : Dr Sivapada Bhattacharya, eminent physician; family friend.

Dr Tripathi : Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Edward Benthall : (Sir), leading British personage in commerce and industry in Bengal; member, Viceroy's Executive Council.

ekadasi : eleventh day of the lunar fortnight.

ekka : small one-horse vehicle.

European Party : British members of the Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Fairweather : Charles Edward Stuart, member of the Indian Police Service.

father-in-law : Dr Beni Madhab Chakraborty, son of Biharilal Chakraborty, the poet.

Fazlul Haq : A.K.Fazlul Haq (1873-1962), President of the All-India Muslim League (1916-21); General Secretary of the Indian National Congress (1918-19); broke from the Muslim League and formed the Krishak Praja Party; Chief Minister of Bengal (1938-41); again from

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1941 to 43; rejoined the Muslim League in 1946; Chief Minister of East Pakistan (1954); Governor of East Pakistan (1956-58).

Gandhi : (Mahatma) Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), campaigned for equal rights for Indians in South Africa by 'non-violent resistance'; dominating figure of the Indian National Congress from 1920 onwards, turning the small movement into a mass movement; initiated the decisions to promote a non-co-operation movement, suffering frequent imprisonments by the British; assasinated in 1948 in Delhi.

G.B. of Asutosh College : Governing Body of Asutosh College of which Syama Prasad was President.

Goddess Lakshmi : Goddess of wealth.

Gokulchand : Gokulchand Narang (1878-1969); Hindu Mahasabha leader from Punjab; lecturer in DAV College, Lahore; Vice President of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha and President of the Punjab Hindu Mahasabha.

Goswami : Tulsi Charan Goswami (1898-1957), prominent public figure of the Indian National Congress from 1921; Finance Minister in Nazimuddin ministry (1943-45).

Gouranga Banerjee : (Dr), Secretary, Postgraduate Teaching in Arts, Calcutta University.

Governor : Sir John Herbert (q.v.)

griha prabesh : house-warming ceremony.

Gurner : Cyril Walter Gurner, member of the Indian Civil Service; Chairman, Calcutta Improvement Trust.

Haldar : S.K.Haldar, member of the Indian Civil Service.

Harenbabu : Dr Harendra Coomar Mookerjee; private tutor of Syama Prasad, Vice-Chairman, Indian Constitutent Assembly (1946-49); Governor of West Bengal (1950 till his death).

Haricharan Ghosh : lecturer, Calcutta University, Personal Secretary of Syama Prasad.

Harischandra : Hindu Mahasabha leader from Punjab.

hartal : general strike

Hasan Imam : eminent lawyer of Patna.

Hashem Ali : member, Bengal Legislative Assembly; minister in the Progressive Coalition Cabinet (1941-43).

Hasina Morshed : member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937-46); social worker.

H.C.Roy Choudhury : Professor Hemchandra Roy Choudhury (1892-1957); eminent historian; Professor of Ancient History & Culture, Calcutta University (1936-52).

H.E. : His Excellency the Governor, Lord Brabourne; Governor of Bombay (1933-37); Governor of Bengal (1937-39).

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Headmaster Satishchandra Basu: Headmaster, Mitra Institution, Bhowanipore.

Heramba Maitra: Dr Heramba Chandra Maitra (1857-1937); Principal, City College (1907-37).

Himadri Mookerjee: Professor Himadri Kumar Mookerjee (1894-1959), cousin; Professor of Zoology, Calcutta University.

Hindustan Standard: English daily of Calcutta.

Hiralal Banerjee: Sir Asutosh Mookerjee's childhood friend and classmate.

Hiralal Haldar: Professor Hiralal Haldar, Professor of Philosophy, Calcutta University (1921-32).

H.K.Sen: Professor H.K.Sen; scientist.

H.M.G.: His Majesty's Government.

Holwell monument: Situated on the north-west corner of Dalhousie Square (B.B.D.Bagh); erected by the British, commemorating the so-called 'Black Hole' episode which supposedly occurred in 1756, when Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah had captured Calcutta; it was subsequently removed to the grounds of St John's Cathedral.

Home Department: permanent officials of the Home Department of Bengal Province.

Hora: Dr Sundar Lal Hora, of Zoological Survey of India.

Hurs: fanatical followers of Pir Pagaro in Sind.

Id Festival: Muslim religious festival at the close of a month's fast during the month of *Ramadan*.

Indubabu: Dr Indu Madhab Basu; eminent physician.

Ispahanis: prominent business house close to Muslim League.

Jagatnarayan Lal: (1896-1966), Congress leader; was attracted to the Hindu Mahasabha and was General Secretary of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha, 1926.

Jalaluddin Hasehmy: Deputy Speaker, Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Jawaharlal Nehru: (1889-1964), a close associate of Gandhiji; won a place second to Gandhiji in the Congress; five times President of the Indian National Congress; conducted campaigns of civil disobedience which led to frequent imprisonment by the British; first Prime Minister of India (1947 till his death in 1964).

Jeremy Raisman: Sir Abraham Jeremy Raisman, member of the Indian Civil Service; Finance Member, Viceroy's Executive Council (1939-45).

J.Gandhy: Sir Jehangir J.Gandhy.

Jinnah: Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948); entered politics as a supporter of the moderates in the Congress and as a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity; left Congress; led the Muslim League in the 1937 elections; led his party to espouse the demand for an independent Muslim State of Pakistan, rejecting all attempts for a compromise; first Governor-General and President of Pakistan.

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Jnanchandra Ghosh : Dr Sir Jnanchandra Ghosh, noted scientist and administrator; Director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (1939-47).

Jnan Mukherjee : Dr Jnanendra Nath Mukherjee (1893-1983); Professor of Chemistry, Calcutta University (1921-50); Director, Indian Institute of Agricultural Research, Pusa.

Jogen Mazumdar : Jogendra Narayan Mazumdar, barrister; Judge, Calcutta High Court (1946-48).

Joges Chakravorti : Joges Chandra Chakravarti, Registrar, Calcutta University (1933-46).

John Anderson : (Sir), Governor of Bengal (1932-37).

John Herbert : Sir John Arthur Herbert, Governor of Bengal (1939-44).

Jugantar : Bengali daily of Calcutta.

Jyotirmoyee Ganguly : Congress leader.

Kabiraji : Ayurvedic system of medicine.

kachauris : a snack made of flour, stuffed with filling, and deep-fried.

kakababu : Bibhutibhushan Chatterjee, cousin of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee.

Kattidada : Srischandra Roy, Syama Prasad's cousin.

Keshab Chandra : Hindu Mahasabha leader from Punjab.

Khagen Babu : Rai Khagendranath Mitra Bahadur (1880-1961); Professor, Presidency College, and Calcutta University; Ramtanu Lahiri Professor of Bengali (1932-46).

khai : puffed rice

Khaitan : Kali Prasad Khaitan, Senior Standing Council, Calcutta High Court.

Khan : N.M.Khan, member of the Indian Civil Service, District Magistrate and Collector of Midnapore (1942-43).

Khan Bahadur Md. Jan : well-known citizen of Calcutta.

Khaparde : Hindu Mahasabha leader from Poona.

Khare : Dr Narayan Bhaskar Khare (1882-1969); Congress leader; joined the Hindu Mahasabha and became its President in 1949.

Khoka : Chittatosh Mookerjee, Rama Prasad Mookerjee's youngest son.

Kiran Sankar Roy : (1891-1949), leader of the Official Congress Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937-46); later, Home Minister in B.C.Roy's Cabinet.

K.P. Biswas : Dr Kalipada Biswas, curator; later, Director of Botanical Gardens (Shibpur); member of the Council, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1940).

Kripalani : M.K.Kripalani, member of the Indian Civil Service.

Krishak Praja Party : formed by Fazlul Haq in 1937.

Krishnamurti : Jiddu Krishnamurti; Philosopher.

Kshitish Neogy : K.C.Neogy, member, Central Legislative Assembly; minister, Union Cabinet (1947-50).

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Kucho : Suhrid Kumar Chatterjee, brother-in-law of Syama Prasad's eldest brother, Rama Prasad Mookerjee.

Latifur Rahaman : prominent citizen of Calcutta.

L.G. Pinnel : member of the Indian Civil Service; Commissioner of several divisions in Bengal (1942).

Liaquat Ali Khan : prominent Muslim League leader, member of the association of the Interim Cabinet, 1946 till partition of India.

Lila Roy : (1900-1970), revolutionary political leader; contributed to the cause of female education; social worker.

Linlithgow : John Hope Linlithgow (1887-1952); second marquis; Chairman, Royal Commission on Indian Agriculture; Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1936-43).

L.K.Mudaliar : Dr Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar; Vice-Chancellor, Madras University.

L.M. Banerjee : Dr Lalit Mohan Banerjee; eminent surgeon.

Lohia : aviator

Lord Brabourne : (1895-1939), fifth baron; Conservative . Member of Parliament (1931-33); Governor of Bombay (1933-37); Governor of Bengal (1937-1939); Acting Viceroy (1938).

Lort-Williams : John Lort-Williams, Judge, Calcutta High Court (1928-41); President, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1940).

luchi : a pancake deep-fried in oil.

Madhusudan Das : teacher of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee in his schooldays; one of the makers of modern Orissa.

Maharaja Digbijoy Nath : Hindu Mahasabha leader from Gorakhpur.

Maharaja Cossimbazar : Srischandra Nandy; land-holder; minister in first Fazlul Haq ministry (1938-41).

Maharajadhiraja Bahadur of Burdwan : Sir Bijay Chand Mahtab.

Maharaja of Mymensingh : Sashi Kanta Acharya Choudhury.

Mahendra Babu : Mahendra Nath Mukhopadhyay, tutor of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee's sons when they were young.

Maheswar Dayal Seth : Raja Saheb of Kotra (UP); Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Makhan Sen : Makhan Lal Sen, journalist; editor of *Bharat*.

Manmatha Roy : Manmathanath Roy, advocate; a family friend.

Manoranjan Choudhury : Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Martin : Martin Burn Ltd.

Master Tara Singh : (1885-1967), prominent Akali leader.

maund : unit of weight equivalent to approximately 84 lbs.

Maurice Gwyer : (Sir) first Chief Justice, Federal Court of India.

Maxwell : Sir Reginald Maitland Maxwell, member of the Indian Civil Service; Home Member, Viceroy's Executive Council (1938-44).

Md. Sulaiman : (Sir), Judge, Allahabad High Court (1923-32); Chief Justice,

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Allahabad High Court (1932-37); Judge, Federal Court of India; connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

MDP Municipality : Madhupur Municipality.

Meera Dutta Gupta : Congress leader.

Mehr Chand Khanna : Hindu Mahasabha leader from NWFP; later joined the Indian National Congress; Rehabilitation Minister of Union of India.

Menukaka : Probodh Ganguli, relative.

mishri : crystallized sugar.

M.N. Mukherjee : Sir Manmatha Nath Mukherjee, Judge, Calcutta High Court (1924-36); officiated as Chief Justice, Calcutta High Court.

Mohendra Bagchi : lawyer; amateur astrologer.

Monibabu : Monindralal Banerjee, distantly related to Syama Prasad.

Moonje : Dr B.S. Moonje, Hindu Mahasabha leader from Bombay; associate of Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

Mrinal Kanti Ghosh : journalist.

M.S. Aney : Madhav Srihari Aney, member, Viceroy's Executive Council, 1942; Vice President of Home Rule League; General Secretary, Indian National Congress, 1934; General Secretary of the Anti-Communal Award Conference.

Mukul Dey : (*c* 1849-1900), eminent artist.

Murshed : Manzur Murshed, Private Secretary to the Chief Minister of Bengal, A.K.Fazlul Haq.

museum : Indian Museum, Calcutta.

Naidu : V.Naidu, Hindu Mahasabha leader from Madras.

Nalinakshya : Dr Nalinakshya Sanyal, educationist; Congress leader.

Namasudra : a Scheduled Caste member

Nantu : Purnendu Kumar Banerjee, grandson of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, eldest son of Pramatha Nath Banerjee and Amala.

Narendra Narayan Chakraworty : Congress member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937-46).

Nausher Ali : (1890-1972), elected to the Bengal Legislative Assembly in 1937 as a Krishak Praja Party member; joined the Indian National Congress in 1941; Speaker of the Bengal Legislative Assembly (1943-45).

Nawab of Dacca : Nawab Khwaja Habibullah Khan Bahadur, Muslim League leader and minister in first Fazlul Haq Cabinet; minister in the Progressive Coalition Cabinet.

Nazimuddin : Khwaja Ahmed Nazimuddin (1894-1964), Muslim League leader; Home Minister of Bengal in the first Fazlul Haq Coalition ministry (1938-41); later, Chief Minister of Bengal (1943-45).

Nemezi : Aga Mirza Mohsin Namazie, lecturer, Department of Arabic & Persian, Calcutta University.

N.G. Majumdar : Nani Gopal Majumdar (1897-1938), of Indian Archaeolo-

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gical Survey; later murdered in 1938 while carrying out excavations in the district of Dadu, Sind.

Nibaran Babu : Nibaran Chandra Ray, Professor of Physics, Scottish Church College.

Niharendu Dutta Majumdar : Member, Bengal Legislative Assembly; Congress leader.

Nilu : Syama Prasad's niece, eldest daughter of Rama Prasad Mookerjee.

Nilu's Ostad : Sitarist, and Nilu's music teacher.

Nirmal Chatterjee : Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee, barrister; Hindu Mahasabha leader; Judge, Calcutta High Court (1948-49); Member of Parliament.

Nishit : Nishit Ranjan Banerjee, married Syama Prasad's eldest daughter Savita.

N.K. Basu : Narendra Kumar Basu, notable criminal lawyer of Calcutta; member of the Bengal Legislative Council.

N.N. Sircar : Sir Nripendranath Sircar (1876-1945); Advocate-General of Bengal (1929-34); Law member, Viceroy's Executive Council (1934-39).

Noakhali : district of undivided Bengal.

Non-co-operation : movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi on 1 August 1920 with fasting and prayer and a suspension of business; there was to be a boycott: of law courts by lawyers; of schools and colleges aided and recognized by the government; of elections to Central & Provincial Legislatures; of honours and titles and of British goods; *swadeshi* was to be encouraged.

N.R. Sarkar : Nalini Ranjan Sarkar (1882-1953), Congress leader; minister in the first Fazlul Haq ministry (1938-41); member, Viceroy's Executive Council.

Original White Paper : British Government declaration regarding separate electorate and reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes in the Legislature.

Pain : *see* Barada Pain.

Pasricha : Colonel C.L.Pasricha, member of the Indian Medical Service; member of the Council of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1940).

Pattabhi Sitaramayya : (1880-1959), leader of the Indian National Congress, contested Subhas Chandra Bose for presidentship of the Indian National Congress.

Patuakhali : Legislative Constituency of Barishal District of undivided Bengal.

P.C. Ray : Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944) (known as Acharya P.C. Ray); Professor of Chemistry in Presidency College and Calcutta University (1916-36); Emeritus Professor since 1937; connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

P.G. : Postgraduate Department of Calcutta University.

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Phanis : Monotosh, Rama Prasad Mookerjee's eldest son.

Pishemashai : Professor Satish Chandra Roy, married sister of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee.

P.N. Banerjea : Dr Pramatha Nath Banerjea (1878-1960), Minto Professor of Economics, Calcutta University; leader Nationalist Party; member of the Central Legislative Assembly (1934-45).

Pochu : Bama Prasad Mookerjee, Syama Prasad's youngest brother.

Poona Pact : pact between Mahatma Gandhi and Dr B.R.Ambedkar which provided for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes out of the General Electorate seats in the Provincial Legislatures.

Porter : A.E. Porter, member of the Indian Civil Service; Additional Secretary, Home Department.

P. & P.Committee : Press & Publications Committee of Calcutta University.

Prabasi : well-known Bengali literary magazine.

Pramatha/P.N.B : Dr Pramatha Nath Banerjee (1893-1976); Syama Prasad's second sister Amala's husband; minister in the Progressive Coalition Cabinet of Fazlul Haq (1941-43); Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University (1945-49).

Pravat : Pravat Kumar Chakraborty, son of Beni Madhab Chakraborty; Syama Prasad's brother-in-law.

Presidency College : founded on 20 June, 1817, as 'Hindu College'; renamed Presidency College in 1855 when it was taken over by the Government.

Provincial Autonomy : limited autonomy enjoyed by provinces under the Government of India Act, 1939.

Pujas/Durga Puja : a four-day-long festival celebrated with pomp and grandeur in Bengal when the Goddess Durga is worshipped.

Purna De : Purnachandra De, (1857-1946) Udbhatsagar; Professor of Sanskrit, Asutosh College.

Radhakrishnan : Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (1888-1975); Professor of Philosophy at Calcutta University; Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions at Oxford; Vice President of India; President of India (1962-67).

Rai Bahadur Tarak Nath Chatterjee : prominent resident of Barrackpore.

Rai Harendranath Chaudhuri : Congress member of the Bengal Legislative Assembly.

Rajagopalachari : Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, (1878-1972), Chief Minister of Madras (1937-39); Governor of West Bengal (1947-48); Governor-General of India (1948-50).

Rajagopalachari Formula : C.R.Formula (10 July 1944); an attempt to break the political impassé following the 'Quit India Movement' and the growing strength of the Muslim League demand for the creation of Pakistan.

Rajendra Ch. Dev : solicitor, Calcutta High Court; Congress leader.

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Rajendra Prasad: (Dr) (1884-1963), President of the Indian National Congress (1934, 1939, 1947-48); Chairman of the Indian Constituent Assembly (1946-50); President of India (1950-62).

Rajendra Singha Singhi: zamindar; elected to the Central Legislative Assembly.

Rajendra Vidyabhusan: lecturer, Sanskrit College; family friend.

Ramachandran: of Archaeological Survey of India.

Raman: Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata (C.V.) Raman (1888-1970), FRS; scientist; Palit Professor of Physics, Calcutta University; awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics (1930); Director of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Ramananda Chatterjee: Editor, *Modern Review*, and *Probasi*.

Ramaswamy Mudaliar: (Sir) member, Viceroy's Executive Council (1939-46).

Ramayan Gan: devotional hymns from the sacred text of the Hindus, '*The Ramayana*'

Ramesh Chandra Mitra: Sir Ramesh Chunder Mitter (1840-99); Judge, Calcutta High Court (1874-90).

Ranima: term of endearment by which Sir Asutosh Mookerjee addressed his eldest daughter, Kamala; a queen is addressed as ranima.

Rashbehari babu: Sir Rashbehari Ghosh, jurist and philanthropist; Sir Asutosh Mookerjee was at one time his junior.

rasogollas: round sweet, made of cottage cheese dipped in syrup.

Ray: Reginald Edwin Anthony Ray, member of the Indian Police Service, Deputy Inspector-General, CID Bengal.

R.C. Majumdar: Dr Ramesh Chandra Majumdar (1888-1980), famous historian; Vice-Chancellor, Dacca University (1937-42).

Reddy: Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Regulation III: of 1818, under which a person would be detained without a trial.

R.O. Raho: Randolph Ogilise (Ramen); a friend.

Roxborough: Sir John James Young Roxborough, member of the Indian Civil Service, Chief Presidency Magistrate, Calcutta; Judge, Calcutta High Court (1939-52)

Roy Saheb Arora: Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Rupen Babu: Sir Rupendra Coomar Mitter; acted as junior of Sir Asutosh in Dumraon case in Patna; Judge, Calcutta High Court (1934-50).

Sachin Banerjee: Sachindra Nath Banerjee, advocate; later Registrar, Original side, Calcutta High Court.

Saha: Dr Meghnad Saha (1893-1956); FRS, eminent scientist; then connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Sailendra Nath Mitra: Secretary, Postgraduate Council in Arts, Calcutta University (1937-48).

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Sakta padavali : devotional hymns in praise of the Goddess Shakti.

Sarat Roy Choudhury : Sanat Kumar Roy Choudhury, advocate; Mayor, Calcutta Corporation; Hindu Mahasabha leader.

Santosh Bose : Santosh Kumar Bose (1889-1977), advocate; Mayor of the Calcutta Corporation; Minister in the Progressive Coalition Cabinet (1941-43).

Santu : Anutosh, Syama Prasad's eldest son.

Sapru Committee : in the wake of the failure of the Gandhi-Jinnah talks in September 1944, the Non-Party Conference elected Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru as Chairman of its twenty-nine member committee charged with examining the whole communal question in a judicial framework.

Saraswati Puja : a celebration in which homage is paid to 'Saraswati', Goddess of learning.

Sarat Basak : Dr Sarat Chandra Basak, eminent lawyer; senior Government Pleader, Calcutta High Court.

Sarat Bose : Sarat Chandra Bose (1889-1950), elder brother of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose; eminent barrister; leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Bengal Legislative Assembly; minister in India Interim Cabinet (1946-47).

Sarat Chandra Memorial : memorial Committee for commemorating eminent litterateur, Sarat Chandra Chatterjee.

Satis Ghosh : Satis Chandra Ghosh (1890-1967); Inspector of Colleges (1936-47), and Treasurer, Calcutta University (1954-66).

Satischandra Mukherjee : Sir Asutosh Mookerjee's cousin.

Satyagraha : a term to denote the non-violent resistance movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi against the British.

Satyakaka : Satya Charan Mukherjee; close friend of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee; well-known criminal lawyer of Allahabad, U P.

Satyananda Basu : Secretary, National Council of Education, Jadavpur.

S.C Bose : Satish Chandra Bose, lecturer of Mathematics; tutor of Syama Prasad.

S.C. Law : Dr Satya Charan Law, orinthologist; member of the Council, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1939-40).

Seargent : Sir John Seargent, Educational Commissioner, Government of India.

Section 93 : provision in the Government of India Act 1935, which enabled the Governor to directly rule a province without a cabinet of ministers.

Sen : Samar Sen, member of the Indian Civil Service; Sub-divisional Officer of Tamluk, 1942.

Shahabuddin : Khwaja Shahabuddin, Muslim League leader; member, Bengal Legislative Assembly (1938-46).

Shamsuddin Ahmed : one of the founders of the Krishak Praja Party ; minister, Bengal Cabinet (1941-43) and (1946-47).

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Shastriji : *see* Bahuballabh Shastri

Siddiqui : Professor Zubair Siddiqui, Asutosh Professor of Islamic Culture, Calcutta University.

Sikandar Hyat Khan : (Sir) (1892-1942); Chief Minister and leader of Unionist Party in Punjab (1937-42).

Simla Conference : (June 1945), convened to discuss the Wavell Plan aimed at breaking the political deadlock in India.

Sir Nilratan : Dr Sir Nilratan Sirkar (1861-1943); foremost physician of Calcutta; family friend; Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University (1919-1921).

S.K. Ghosh : Member, Indian Civil Service; convicted for criminal offence and dismissed from service for corruption.

S.N. Banerjee : Sailendra Nath Banerjee, well-known barrister of Calcutta; Hindu Mahasabha leader.

S.N. Bhattacharyya : barrister; lecturer, University Law College.

S.N. Ray : Dr Satyendranath Ray, eminent pathologist.

Stafford Cripps : (Sir) (1889-1952), Solicitor-General in the Labour Government (1930-31); British Ambassador in Moscow (1940-42); member of War Cabinet and deputed by it to India (1942); member of Cabinet Mission to India (1946); Chancellor of the Exchequer (1945-47).

Subhas Bose : Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose (b 1887), President of the Indian National Congress (1938 & 39); left Congress and formed the Forward Bloc Party; escaped to Germany (1941); organised the Indian National Army in south-east Asia for the liberation of India.

Sudha : Syama Prasad's wife.

Sudhir Roychaudhuri : prominent Councillor in the Calcutta Corporation; Mayor, Calcutta Corporation.

Suhrawardy : Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy (1893-1963), joined the Muslim League in Bengal; Minister (1943-45); Chief Minister of Bengal (1946 till partition); Prime Minister of Pakistan (1956-57).

Suniti Chatterjee : Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee (1890-1977); eminent scholar; Professor of Linguistics & Phonetics, Calcutta University (1921-52).

Suren Sen : Professor Surendra Nath Sen, eminent historian; Professor of History, Calcutta University; Keeper of Imperal Records (now known as National Archives), Government of India.

Surendranath Banerjea : Sir Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925); President of the Indian National Congress (1895 & 1902); left Congress (1918); minister in Bengal under diarchy (1921-23).

Suresh Chakrabarti : Advocate; Syama Prasad's daughter, Savita's, father-in-law.

Suresh Majumdar : Suresh Chandra Majumdar, Managing Editor of *Ananda Bazar Patrika*.

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Sushil : Sushil Kumar Chatterjee, an associate of Syama Prasad.

Susil Mukherjee : (Dr) eminent Eye Surgeon of Calcutta; member of the Senate, Calcutta University.

Swadeshi : the protest against partitioning of Bengal in 1905 was the first political movement and came to be known as the 'Swadeshi Movement'; literally means using articles only produced in one's own country.

Tarak Mukherjee : minister in Nazimuddin ministry, Bengal (1943-45).

Taylor : Stanley Griswood Taylor, member of the Indian Police Service.

Tej Bahadur Sapru : (Sir) (1875-1949), leader of the 'moderates'; advocate of Allahabad; Law Member, Viceroy's Executive Council (1920-23).

The Statesman : English daily of Calcutta.

Tilak Anniversary : Birthday celebrations of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, (1856-1920), regarded as the leader of the extremists and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment; he wrote scholarly works on Indian History and Philosophy.

troyodoshi : thirteenth day of the lunar calendar.

tulsi : basil; considered to be sacred by the Hindus.

Umichand : a synonym for a betrayer; he was a financier of Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah of Bengal; he, with Mir Zaffar and others had conspired against the Nawab and joined hands with Lord Clive.

Upanayan : Sacred thread ceremony whereby adolescent Hindu Brahmin boys are initiated into Brahminhood.

Usha : nickname of Romola, Syama Prasad's youngest sister.

Vallabbhai Patel : Sardar Vallabbhai Patel (1875-1950), Congress leader; President of the Indian National Congress (1931); member of the Interim Government (1946-47); Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Home, State, Information & Broadcasting (1947-50).

Van Manen : Johann Van Manen; General Secretary, Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1938.

V.C. : Vice-Chancellor, Sir Azizul Haque (1890-1947); Education Minister of Bengal (1934-37); Speaker, Bengal Legislative Assembly (1937); Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University (1938-42).

Veer Savarkar : Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1883-1966); revolutionary patriot; President of the Hindu Mahasabha.

Venkatesachar : connected with the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

Viswa-Kosh : Bengali encyclopedia, originally edited and published in twenty-two volumes by Nagendra Nath Basu.

Walker : J.R. Walker, member, Bengal Legislative Assembly representing Bengal Chamber of Commerce.

Wavell Plan : in August 1944, the Viceroy, Lord Wavell proposed an Interim Government with an equal number of Hindus and Muslims, one representative each from the Sikhs and the depressed classes besides the Commander-in-Chief and the Viceroy.

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